APRIL 24, 2000

Microsoft: Judgment Day · Eben Moglen

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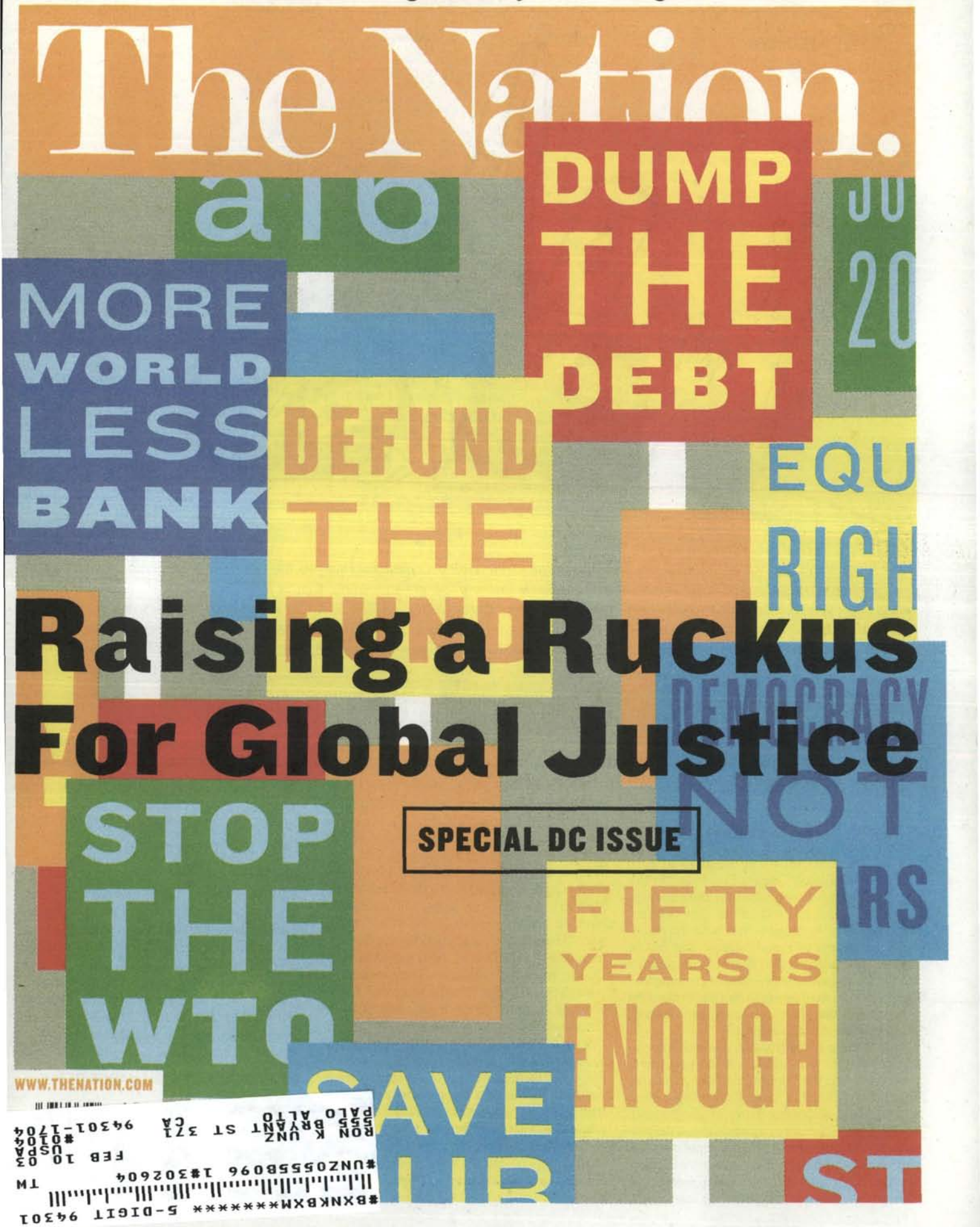

Raising a Ruckus For Global Justice

SPECIAL DC ISSUE

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CARTOONISTS & WRITERS SYNDICATE

How many ways can we cartoonists deal with abortion-clinic violence, philandering pro-life politicians and endless court battles over access to a legal procedure? The technical answer is lots and lots of ways, as the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy's intelligently curated exhibit (my work was in it, after all) at the Ceres Gallery in New York City recently showed. It was a joy to see our disposable little drawings outlive their usual twenty-four-hour life spans and to recognize how they offer a movement known for its earnest and often bitter rhetoric a humorously subversive way to illustrate its views. A cartoon can't keep a clinic open but it can buoy the spirits of those who do. —Signe Wilkinson

LETTERS

BETTER LIVING THROUGH ECOCIDE

Boston, Mass.

■ I share William Greider's queasiness about *Natural Capitalism* [Feb. 28]. (Or should I say "Natural Capitalism!"—in the style of your headline "Business Creates Eco-Side!"?) But I can't feel much optimism for the Hawken-Lovinses "industrial revolution." For openers, the notion that "ecological destruction is essentially a problem of system design that can be solved" is a doctrine that simply gives permission to the moremoremore ethic of consumption and pollution that got us in trouble in the first place (build that dam, construct that highway, "better living through chemistry").

Sure, there are recyclable, reusable imperatives to follow. But consider GM's ploys with pure cars, and the "doubt" Greider expresses should swell to SUV size. Destroying habitat and farmland, despoiling the air, creating sprawl, consuming 30 percent of its waste in just the production and mis-serving half the population, the car may be capitalism but—nature's minister? Hardly. Such dirty green-is-great enterprises from such promoters should inspire fear.

Greider's blanching at the "brisk self-confidence of a business-management primer" attitude is more justified than he thinks. Investigating the truth-in-advertising of the so-called clean car was enough to scare the horses. "People in Motion...Driving the Next Generation...Good, clean fun," GM described the vehicle in a press kit I got along with a children's book on Daniel and His Electric Car. "Guess what, Daddy, this car is good for the environment too!" said Daniel, who suggested that Daddy make their new car—their second car (and, hey, why not third!)—electric. I, too, checked further into the Rocky Mountain Institute to see how the hype was going for their "hypercar." The institute's director of marketing and public relations touched on its flywheels and fuel cells, then alerted me to the new hypercar website. "Think of a Hypercar as a computer with a car wrapped around it, rather than a car with a computer in it," he said. If only, I sighed.

Sure, business can be better, cleaner, can be coaxed into line, but it's still the bottom line that powers the capitalist mindset. Sure, that's their business. But *The Nation* is the last place I expect to see fuzzy-wuzzy, feel-good optimism for corporate self-policing instead of a call for tough, true-green policies. JANE HOLTZ KAY

LADIES, PLEASE!

Berkeley, Calif.

■ It's unfortunate that Third Wave's Ladies' Night admission policy falls short of symbolically correcting the wage gap ["In Fact," March 20]. They have been foiled by that other gender-gap phenomenon, the math gap. They should be charging men $1.33 admission instead of $1.25 (relative to their own $1 admission) if they want to fully reverse the 75 cents on the dollar that women get in the workplace relative to men. DEREK SHUMAN

BAUMGARDNER & RICHARDS REPLY

New York City

■ After printing 1,200 invitations, we too noticed that we had calculated the wage gap at 25 cents rather than 25 percent—but it sure made making change easier. As Shuman points out,

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Seattle Sequel in DC

"Seattle East," "A16," "Mobilization for Global Justice"—by whatever name you call it, a coalition of Teamsters and turtles, students and scholars, church, human rights, consumer and environmental activists is about to descend on Washington to call the global economy to account. On April 9 the AFL-CIO joins the church-based Jubilee 2000 in a rally to demand the cancellation of the debts of impoverished countries. On April 12, student activists will join 10,000 workers and their families as they flood Congress on "lobby day," urging a no vote on a bill that would clear the way for China's entry into the WTO, a move that would almost certainly dash any hope of fundamental change in that corporate-friendly organization. On April 16 there will be a rally and direct action against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Already, A16 has generated consternation in high places. The business lobby carted in 500 employees to lobby for the China vote. The *Washington Post* featured a story on police training for the coming confrontations and another that portrayed the nonviolent activists, who were remarkably well disciplined in Seattle, as eerie anarchists. Hysterical corporate apologists have been fulminating against know-nothings and protectionism.

But the cacophony won't drown out the message. Even in the midst of the longest US economic expansion on record, the global economy faces a growing crisis of legitimacy. The movement against it has many voices, but it is united by a sense of moral urgency. This is the new internationalism that has captured the imagination of the most politically committed young people, just as civil rights and Vietnam did for their parents' generation. And much of its agenda is supported by the vast majority of Americans. Polls consistently show that more and more Americans believe workers are getting the shaft in the global economy, oppose giving China permanent trading status, favor enforcing workers' rights and environmental protections in trade accords, and want action against sweatshops and child labor. It is also a movement that is not restricted to the United States: The protesters in Seattle included farmers from France, human rights supporters from Tibet and environmental activists from Latin America.

This movement, like its predecessors, is faced with the entrenched resistance of both major parties, whose leaders join in pushing the corporate globalization agenda. Even now, the Administration is working behind the scenes to find some fig leaf that will allow Democrats in Congress to vote for the China bill while maintaining that they are concerned about workers' rights.

Seattle East will display the passion of this growing movement, but it represents only a corner of its activities. Pension fund managers are now forced to address questions of corporate behavior. University administrators are learning how to deal with sit-ins again. Democrats are discovering that newly energized labor will no longer give them a free pass. And this is just the beginning. Spring is in the air—and a new movement is blossoming.

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The Miami Veto

With the Elián González case in its endgame, the overwrought streets of Little Havana are populated with visions and prophecies: Dolphin-guided Elián as Santeria portent; Lázaro González's bathroom as site for a visitation from the Virgin Mary; Mayor Alex Penelas as *jefe* of a Miami liberated from adherence to the Constitution. Al Gore is having bathroom-mirror visions too: of himself stealing Florida's twenty-five electoral votes and masses of campaign cash from Governors Jeb and George W. Bush. Gore waded in to endorse Connie Mack and Bob Graham's going-nowhere bill that would grant Elián permanent residency in the United States. Within days he flew to fundraisers in Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale.

Gore may or may not win Florida, but his evasive maneuvering undercuts his self-description as a born-again reformer. Just days after endorsing the residency bill, he said on *Today* that Elián should be turned over to his father if he declares his intentions "on free soil." Then a few hours later he issued a "clarification," saying the case belongs in family court—which, though Gore did not say so, could only happen with special legislation. Gore's slow dance with Miami's Cuban leadership may stir a backlash from other Floridians angry at how the affair has dragged on—never mind the broader public, which by a 2-to-1 ratio still favors the boy's return to his father. The Vice President's intercession will do little to lure the majority of fiercely conservative Cuban-Floridians. To their credit, neither President Clinton nor Janet Reno, his Attorney General, have played that cynical game.

Much has been made of Gore's distancing himself from the White House on the Elián issue, but Gore has not learned the lessons of Lani Guinier, of NAFTA, of welfare reform and a host of other Clinton feints to the right. Far from neutralizing the opposition, each of these moves emboldened the far right and institutionalized conservative reforms while infuriating rank-and-file Democrats. "I think it has a cost in terms of his reputation for convictions and commitment," retired Representative Lee Hamilton scolded recently. And given the frenzy in Miami, Gore's calls to hand Elián over to Florida's family court gave instant comfort to Mayor Penelas and Cuban-American leaders in their threatened noncooperation with federal judicial authority. Penelas's noncooperation vow was reminiscent of local officials' defiance of federal law in the South during the desegregation struggle.

If any good comes from the Elián case, it may be broad public awareness of the corrupt foreign-policy veto still exercised by Miami's unregenerate cold warriors. To them, Elián González embodies the future of Cuba. The hard-line Cuban-exile leadership wants to repossess the island, repatriating wealth and influence after Castro's passing. Continuing to isolate Cuba from other US investment through the embargo is crucial to this long-term exile scheme.

Power plays and pandering have delayed too long the desperately needed end to this exercise in political child abuse. By seizing an opportunity to challenge the Miami veto, Al Gore

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could have opened up a new debate on our rigid, obsolete Cuba policy. Instead, he sided with the discredited past.

Microsoft: Judgment Day

Despite all the palaver, the denouement came quickly. Microsoft's decision to walk away from Judge Richard Posner's mediation efforts and to stake its future on overturning Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson's legal conclusions immediately resulted in the release of a judgment no one is going to overturn. Bill Gates, who as a child probably didn't play well with others, has elected to knock over all the blocks rather than share. Judge Jackson, for his part, has brought the Microsoft Era to a certain and devastating end.

The fate of Microsoft is now sealed. Whatever remedy Judge Jackson may eventually decide to impose, Microsoft will be distracted, eroded and dismembered by the avalanche of private antitrust litigation that Judge Jackson's findings of fact and conclusions of law make possible. The most difficult burden for most antitrust plaintiffs is that of proving that their adversary possesses monopoly power in the relevant market; the second most difficult is that of proving that their adversary's actions constituted an attempt to achieve or maintain that monopoly power by forbidden means. Now any firm that believes that Microsoft has deprived it of fair opportunities to compete in the market for PC software need not prove either of those matters. Jackson's judgment means that the facts he found last November are unassailable by Microsoft in other litigation, the effect of what lawyers call "collateral estoppel." In order to recover antitrust damages, which under the Sherman Antitrust Act are triple their provable monetary losses, firms need only prove that Microsoft's conduct—as a proven monopolist that maintained its monopoly by illegal means—caused them monetary harm. Microsoft faces at least a decade of litigation with all the market participants it has threatened, knee-capped or destroyed. Gates's e-mail, that reservoir of documented commercial knavery unprecedented in the history of American antitrust litigation, will be in constant demand. The litigation will constrain Microsoft, opening opportunities for new competitors to emerge free of the hitherto omnipresent concern with Microsoft's probable response to each and every attempt to create new protocols and possibilities for the Net.

By the evening of April 3, mere hours after release of the judgment, the nature of the Microsoft response was clear. The right of appeal, the company said, would result in Microsoft's exoneration. But that is unlikely—even if the case goes all the way to the Supreme Court. Judge Jackson's legal conclusions are painstakingly related to his factual findings, which no appellate court will disturb unless they are "clearly erroneous," a standard that is unlikely to be met in the mind of even the most skeptical appellate judge. Jackson's application of antitrust doctrine in his opinion, which accepted most but not all of the plaintiffs' legal theories, was deliberately orthodox, not experimental or innovative in any respect. And despite the pending appeal, the collateral-estoppel effect begins immediately, as will the flood of private litigation.

Gates also declared that Jackson's opinion "turns on its head

PUBLISHING WITH ANDRÉ

On March 24 André Schiffrin, head of The New Press and a contributor to this magazine, was presented the Poor Richard's Award by the Small Press Center. After leaving Pantheon Books, Schiffrin founded The New Press. We like to think that the industry's future lies with independent ventures like The New Press, Verso, Monthly Review, Seven Stories and others, including Nation Books, the new imprint of The Nation Institute. Here are excerpts from the remarks of Robert Bernstein, former president and chairman of Random House, at the awards ceremony:

André represents today everything that is right about publishing. I can best explain why by telling you briefly the story of my life with André, which began thirty-eight years ago when Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer, the impresarios of Random House, bought Pantheon and got André as part of the deal. During his entire time as part of Random House, André signed what he wished, paid what he wished, made a little money and sometimes lost a little. It would never have occurred to André to consult the sales department, the publicity department and, least of all, the financial department to ask their opinion about whether a book should be signed, as is done in many large publishing houses today. Frankly, I cannot understand this process myself—how does an editor explain something he has read to people who have not read it but have a vote on whether to publish it?

When I was in my first job in the late forties at Simon & Schuster, they used to run a pool at sales conferences to see if the sales force could pick the bestselling book on the list, and the worst. Everyone put in a dollar. One year the sales force picked a book on polling by George Gallup as a sure-fire hit. It was around the time that Truman had beaten Dewey, upsetting the pollsters' predictions. That book turned out to be the poorest seller on the list. The book they picked to be the worst seller was Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy*, the number-one bestseller at Essandess that year and still in print.

During André's twenty-eight years at Random House the financial department was constantly in his hair. While his contribution to overhead was fine, his profits, the bookkeepers felt, were too small. André would carefully explain that he didn't need to be housed in a glamorous skyscraper on Third Avenue, nor did Pantheon need the huge sales overhead Random House maintained to sell its juvenile list and other mass-merchandise books. He pointed out that Pantheon had sold over a million copies of *Dr. Zhivago* with only two salesmen.

André Schiffrin is one model of what I believe the new world of publishing will be. Publishing, always an easy entry business, will become more so in this new communications and distribution world we live in.

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EDITORIALS

the reality that consumers know"—that Windows made computers more accessible to people throughout society. But antitrust is not only about consumers' welfare. As I wrote in these pages [see Moglen, "Antitrust and American Democracy," November 30, 1998], antitrust is also, and primarily, about protecting democracy from overconcentrations of private economic power. Gates's invocation of "what consumers know" distorts antitrust law to lose this point.

How PCs work in the era of the Internet is an essentially political question. If Microsoft had wanted to give desktop icons to the Democratic and Republican parties but not to the Greens, no seller of a "Green PC," designed to appeal to the socially conscious buyer, could have added a Green Party icon without Microsoft's permission. Monopolization of the PC operating system by a single commercial entity determined uncounted political and social questions by default, in ways that consumers never had a chance to understand.

This power to control the environment of the PC, in which more and more of us spend increasing proportions of our lives, conveys a power to shape, at a level so ubiquitous as to be barely noticeable to the average user, the nature of the public discourse. Which Internet medium can everyone get to with one click? Which points of view are considered appropriate for everyone's computer to represent? Throughout the era of the Microsoft monopoly, those decisions were made by a single private power, ceding it more undivided leverage over our collective symbolic environment than anyone in our society. For this reason, the destruction of that monopoly is far more important to the politics of our age than destruction of the petroleum or tobacco trusts was in the era of Theodore Roosevelt. Microsoft will no doubt argue that this increase in diversity will somehow destroy the benefit to consumers of an environment of widespread technical compatibility. This argument is a fallacy. Consumers will not have less good software to use once the Microsoft we know has perished. The culture of the Net will be in all ways healthier, and the politics of the information society will have lost its single most undemocratic feature.

EBEN MOGLEN

Eben Moglen, professor of law and legal history at Columbia University Law School, serves without fee as general counsel of the Free Software Foundation. For more, see his website (http://emoglen.law.columbia.edu).

CALVIN TRILLIN

EXTENDING THE ELIÁN GONZÁLEZ POLICY

Yes, any Cuban kid would thrive right here.
At Disney World he'd surely have a ball.
And over there he lacks what we revere.
So maybe we should simply snatch them all.

Storm Over Taiwan

Taiwan had a massive earthquake this past September, sending large seismic waves crashing on the shores of Pacific islands and rippling through Silicon Valley, which buys most of its semiconductor chips and computer mother-boards from this productive island. Another one erupted in March when the people of Taiwan stunned the pollsters and several world capitals by electing opposition leader Chen Shui-bian, thus finally ending the fifty-five-year reign of the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party, or KMT). So far this earthquake has only set off mild ripples: The Clinton Administration has dispatched top-level emissaries to Beijing to urge that wise heads prevail on all sides, and China appears to want WTO entry before it figures out what to do about Chen. But we're living through the calm before the storm: Nothing in recent years is more likely to provoke Sino-American confrontation than this democratic act by a people who finally threw off a century's worth of colonizers. A much greater calamity, however, would follow a US decision to re-intervene in the Chinese civil war.

Taiwan's imperial past amid a democratic present is what makes autonomy for the island so threatening to the peace. Japan defeated China in 1895 and immediately colonized Taiwan, holding it until 1945. Carpetbagging Chinese Nationalists seized the island at the point of a gun after Japan's collapse, killing tens of thousands of islanders in a massive rebellion in 1947. And so, in utter contrast to their neighbors in Korea, the Taiwanese have looked upon their experience with Japan as a reasonably tolerable and efficacious interlude between ineffectual Qing Dynasty rule and rapacious KMT misgovernment. As late as 1970 a US political scientist sojourning in Taiwan found nostalgia for the Japanese era and contempt for Chiang Kai-shek's rule at every turn. Meanwhile, the KMT had a field day gobbling up colonial assets, especially state firms that the Japanese had owned; eventually $20 billion piled up in party coffers from the 300 companies that it continues to control, according to *The Kuomintang Auction*, published in Taipei in January. The KMT controlled the government as a politburo would, ruling under a martial-law regime for four decades until the 1987 elections.

Enter President Lee Teng-hui, the most important leader Taiwan has had next to Chiang Kai-shek, and the biggest disaster for cross-straits relations. Lee was educated in Japan, often speaks Japanese at home and paved the way for the independence-minded Chen to win the election by (purposely?) causing a split between two KMT men, James Soong (who won 36 percent of the vote) and the titular KMT candidate, Lian Chan (who got a miserable 23 percent). This past summer Lee needled Beijing into another round of dangerous bluster by declaring that cross-straits relations should be "state to state" [see Cumings, "Taiwan Talks Tough," August 23/30, 1999]. Now, on his way out, he's left a time bomb ticking in Chen's desk.

Chen has long been the most prominent advocate of Taiwan's independence (though he tempered his position during the election). Beijing, however, sees independence as the prelude to a Japanese shadow again falling upon the island. With any number

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EDITORIALS

of vexing issues left over from Japan's depredations in China from 1931 to 1945, nothing is more inclined to get China's back up than this outcome, and Beijing has strong public support for dealing harshly with President-elect Chen: According to polls, 95 percent of Chinese favor using force if Taiwan declares independence.

KMT assets have worked inside the Beltway for as long as the party has ruled Taiwan, and its intelligence services have long-standing ties, going back to World War II, with hard-liners in our national security state. A sidekick of Lee's lubricated the prominent lobbying firm Cassidy & Associates with $4.5 million in 1994 so that it could pull off a visit by President Lee to his alma mater, Cornell. And ever since George Bush left office, Taiwan's Washington allies have savaged Clinton's China policy, encouraging the island's autonomy and pushing for a direct US commitment to defend Taiwan. With allies in the military-industrial complex, they are backing the sale of high-tech Aegis missile-defense destroyers to Taiwan, an act some Chinese leaders have said would be a *casus belli*.

Bill Clinton has let such people act with impunity, and his wanton pursuit of globalization has now brought events to a precarious turning point. Will members of his own party succeed in blocking China's WTO membership in the upcoming, very tight House vote, thus making Beijing hard-liners who oppose reform look like visionaries? Chen Shui-bian knows enough to keep his mouth shut in this tense situation, and thus far, so does Beijing.

Neither Gore nor Bush would do anything different from what Clinton has done, because both men are committed to China's key role in globalizing production, with both drawing campaign funds from the same huge corporate coalition salivating over the China market. Indeed, Beijing may well feel free to bring things to a head before (or even during) the election.

Recently, David Sanger of the *New York Times* blithely wrote that "Washington has been committed to Taiwan's defense since the cold war." Someone ought to explain to him and the American people that there has been no such commitment, ever since Washington scuttled its defense treaty with Taiwan in 1979.

The emergence of Taiwan's democracy will exercise a strong refractory effect on China's democracy movement. But it is not the occasion for Taiwan's independence and certainly not for US intervention. Franklin Roosevelt gave Taiwan back to China mainly to punish Japan; five years later Harry Truman snatched the island back by inserting the 7th Fleet into the Taiwan Strait just as the Korean War began in June 1950. Predictably, this led to a disastrous Sino-American war and thirty years of defending dictatorship in Taiwan. The hypocrisy of turning around now and defending Taiwan's independence under Chen would only be matched by the realpolitik idiocy of going to war with China over this tight little island.

BRUCE CUMINGS

Bruce Cumings teaches at the University of Chicago.

In Fact...

HAITIAN HERO

Amy Wilentz writes: Jean Dominique, who was assassinated April 3 in Port-au-Prince, was a part of every Haitian's morning ritual. There was coffee, and there was Radio Haiti-Inter, of which he was the founder and principal force. Dominique's Parisian-inflected French and energetic Creole were unmistakable, as was his message of righteous devotion to democracy. In a long career that spanned both Duvaliers, two stints in exile and the political killing of a brother, Dominique remained dedicated to journalism and to freedom, and he had utter contempt for the kind of dangerous, petty political maneuvering and violence for which Haiti has sadly been infamous. This may have led to his murder. Last October he denounced former army major Dany Toussaint and Toussaint's cronies as anti-mulatto racists (Dominique was mulatto). He also accused Toussaint—who now runs a security company and is licensed to import weapons into Haiti—of masterminding several recent political assassinations and of launching a violent attack on Radio Haiti-Inter. The tirade Dominique delivered on the day after the attack on his radio station was the equivalent of beckoning to one's assassin. "I feel only repugnance," he said, "when I see someone use the fresh corpses of comrades to further his own personal ambitions. If Toussaint tries something again and if I'm still alive, I'll close the station and I'll go into exile once more. The silence you'll hear then will be a silence to wake the dead. The only weapon I have is my journalist's profession, my microphone and my unshakable faith as a militant for change, veritable change."

CHRISTIAN WOMEN FIGHT BACK

On March 3 to 4 the Christian Coalition held its first annual Women Changing America conference, devoted to enlisting women in the struggle against godless depravity. Here are some highlights from the various speeches, provided by People for the American Way, which monitors the radical right: Michelle Easton of the Claire Boothe Luce Policy Institute said that Take Your Daughter to Work Day was a radical feminist plot to "breed victimology in the hearts and minds of young girls." Janet Folger, national director of the Center for Reclaiming America, reported that the "goal of the homosexual lobby...is nothing short of the criminalization of Christianity." Andrea Sheldon Lafferty, executive director of the Traditional Values Coalition, told of a secret industry that sells baby body parts. Fetuses are extracted, "sliced and diced" and "shipped to ten different states." She added, somewhat obscurely: "I think we're going to have to apologize to the Nazis for this." Karen Jo Gounau, the guiding spirit of Family Friendly Libraries, an avowed censorship group, blamed unfiltered access to the Internet via library computers for an alleged increase in the number of children being molested in library bathrooms. Dede Robertson, Pat's wife, oblivious to John McCain's complaint that extremists like her husband are splitting the GOP, lambasted Republicans in Congress for not standing up to adultery, homosexuality and other evils. "These men don't want to fight," she sniffed. "They don't want to be called intolerant."

NEWS OF THE WEAK IN REVIEW

The Seattle WTO protests have given rise to a public relations subindustry, writes Professor Elaine Bernard of Harvard. Black, Kelly, Scruggs & Healey, a division of Burson Marsteller, one of the major Beltway PR firms and corporate image buffers, is circulating a "Guide to the Seattle Meltdown," a comprehensive listing of the activist groups that protested at Seattle and descriptions of their aims. It warns about "the potential ability of the emerging coalition of these groups to seriously impact broader, longer-term corporate interests." Not to worry, corporate chiefs: "At Black, Kelly, Scruggs & Healey, we have developed a capability direction of these groups... to defend clients against their attacks."

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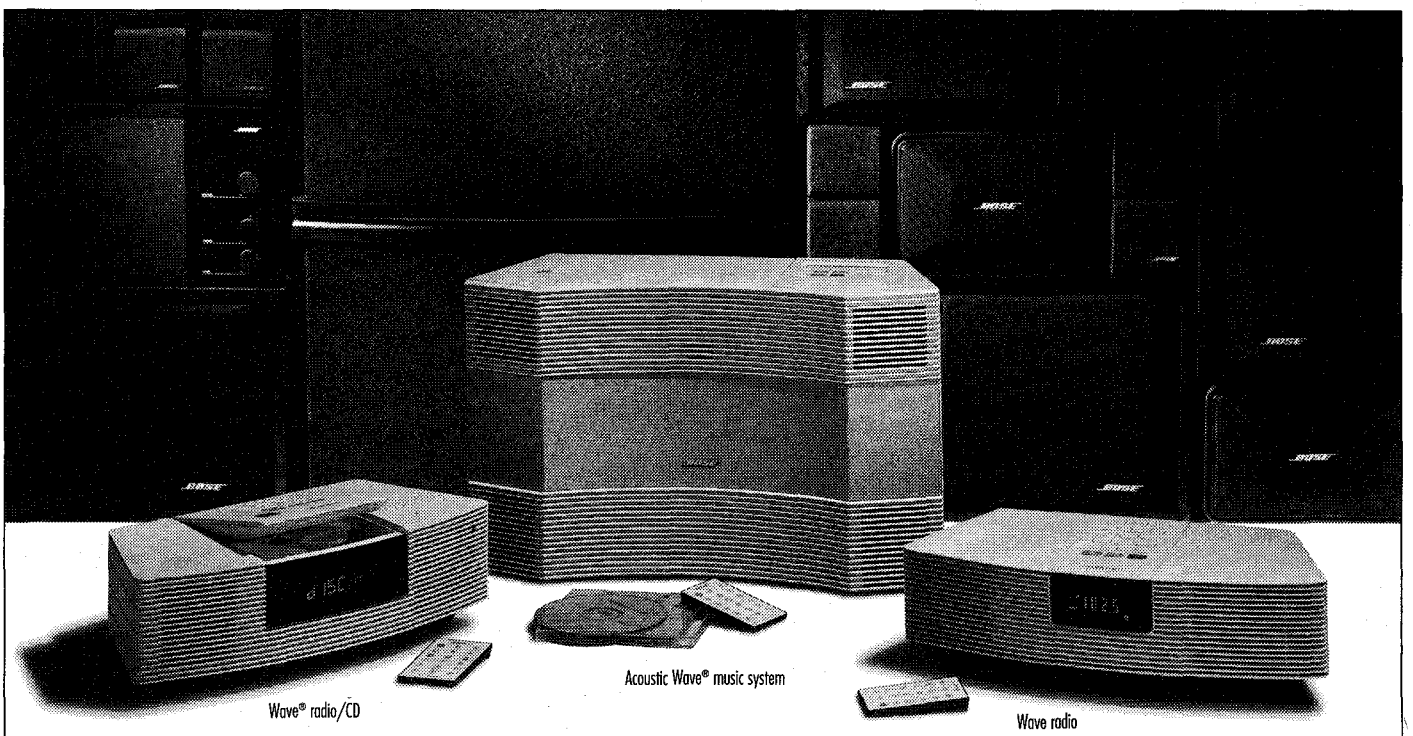

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THE BEAT

From Seattle to Washington After last fall's anti-WTO protests rocked Seattle and the world, activists asked, "What next?" The answer is a week of teach-ins, lobbying, marches, rallies and nonviolent civil disobedience leading up to the April 16–17 spring meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. **Direct Action Network**, **Global Exchange**, **50 Years Is Enough**, the **Alliance for Democracy** and the **Rainforest Action Network** took the lead in coordinating efforts by more than 400 organizations ranging from the **Progressive Librarians Guild** to **DC Lesbian Avengers** to **Anabaptists for Community Transformation**. After initial hesitation, the AFL-CIO endorsed the A16 action.... "We're going to participate in every teach-in, every rally, every action we can be a part of," says **Steph Sherer**, a 24-year-old San Diego college student, who is active in the local anti-WTO group. With other activists, she raised money from churches and peace organizations to help fly fifteen local people of modest means to DC, convinced a documentary filmmaker to follow the group, arranged to update a website (activistsandiego.org) daily, set up press conferences and organized an April 24 forum at San Diego's City College. "We're determined to get our message out—not just in Washington but at home," she says. "We want people to know that the demonstrators in Washington are their friends and neighbors."

Pastors and Plumber The April 9 **Jubilee 2000** rally to cancel debts owed by poor nations will have an international flavor, with speeches by Archbishop **Oscar Rodriguez** of Honduras, AFL-CIO vice president **Linda Chavez-Thompson**, *Sojourners* editor **Jim Wallis** and **Friends of the Earth** international president **Ricardo Navarro**. Singer **Dar Williams** and the African band **Waza Bakula** will perform before the crowd forms a human chain on the National Mall to symbolize the chains of debt. Monday morning citizen lobbyists will deliver handmade "chains" of paper and cloth to Congressional offices. On Tuesday the **Religious Working Group on the World Bank and the IMF** will mark the biblical "Stations of the Cross" with dramatizations of economic oppression at downtown DC locations.

No Blank Check for China Union buses roll into DC April 12 for the labor movement's rally on Capitol steps against Bill Clinton's plan to grant permanent most-favored-nation status to China. Expect major contingents from **Teamsters**, **Steelworkers** and **UNITE**. The rally will accompany a day of lobbying on the Hill, where there is already support from the Congressional **Progressive Caucus**, which says that permanent MFN for China would be "a serious defeat for the cause of worker rights."

Don't Leave Home Without It The booklet "False Profits: Who wins, who loses, when the IMF, World Bank and WTO come to town" is packed with info, contacts and a glossary. Get it from **Campaign for Labor Rights:** (541) 344-5410.... Check out the Washington mobilization website (www.a16.org) and a new website from Representative **Bernie Sanders** (http://bernie.house.gov/legislation/economy) that has useful policy information. Also on the site is a transcript of Sanders's clashes with Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers. Sanders told him during a Congressional appearance in late March that "the IMF as an institution is in desperate need of some structural adjustment of its own."

Bad Bonds **Neil Watkins** of the **Center for Economic and Policy Research** has a DC souvenir for activists: Sample legislation that commits local governments, universities and other institutions to stop buying World Bank bonds. "The bank tells developing countries: Change or we'll stop giving you money," he says. "We want municipalities to tell the Bank: Change or *we'll* stop giving *you* money." Berkeley's City Council passed the model legislation on March 28.

Grounds Against Starbucks Starbucks stockholders booed **Global Exchange**'s **Medea Benjamin** when she accused the chain of purveying sweatshop coffee and urged the chain to buy Fair Trade coffee beans, for which farmers earn living-wage pay. Now Global Exchange is organizing April 13 "Roast Starbucks" demonstrations in LA, San Francisco, Buffalo and two dozen other cities. In Washington activists will march to the Starbucks nearest the World Bank HQ. "Starbucks will be known as the purveyors of sweatshop coffee," says Benjamin.

Speaking of Sweatshops Fresh from college sit-ins and a hunger strike at Purdue, student activists will join the "Sweatshops: Globalizing the Resistance" teach-in April 14 at DC's St. Stephen's Church, featuring speeches by **Berta Lujan** of Mexico, **Marina Rios** of El Salvador and **Chie Abad**, who worked in a Gap sweatshop in Saipan. "We want to give antisweatshop activists a chance to meet people they're working in solidarity with," says **Melinda St. Louis** of **Campaign for Labor Rights**.

Carnival Against Capital "Some people call it a Festival of Resistance. Some call it a Carnival Against Capital," says **Direct Action Network**'s **Alli Starr** of the April 16–17 World Bank/IMF protests. The streets will be filled with art and revolution—everything from Palm Sunday services to lockdowns. There's going to be dancing and singing, puppets and props. And the sea turtles are coming back, just as in Seattle. *TV Nation*'s **Michael Moore** will emcee Sunday's rally, but most action will be offstage. Trained at the convergence headquarters on Florida Avenue, activists will step out with "mass movements for mass movements" dance steps. **The Harmonic Intervention** chorus will sing a **June Jordan** poem that goes, "We have come too far/We won't turn around/We'll flood the streets with justice/We are freedom bound."

John Nichols's e-mail address is jnichols@thenation.com. The Online Beat will be filing DC updates daily at www.thenation.com/thebeat.

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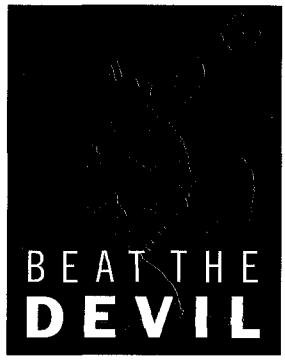
ALEXANDER COCKBURN

To Make Mistakes Is Glorious



At the end of April we'll have arrived at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, when the last fugitives clambered into helicopters at the US Embassy compound in Saigon. Gays are planning a big march on Washington for April 30 but not, at least officially, to celebrate that setback for US imperialism. I hope some speaker in Washington that day will note that the Stonewall riot and gay liberation drew inspiration and fury from the antiwar movement, as did women's liberation. Environmentalism too. In 1967 Lynn White Jr. wrote "The Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," an essay arguing that the green movement had to start by rejecting God's injunction to Adam and Eve, in Genesis 1:26–28, to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it." Not so long thereafter, in part as a tactic to divide and co-opt the antiwar left, Nixon gave environmentalists a presidential imprimatur by founding the EPA.

These days I often face audiences in which most of the people present weren't even born when those helicopters lifted off the embassy roof in Saigon. But that day the Vietnam War ended doesn't seem so long ago to me, any more than the fall of the Spanish Republic would have seemed distant to my father when he went back to Madrid for the first time in a quarter of a century—this was in the early sixties—and the taxi driver taking him to a battlefield where many of my father's friends had died remarked amiably, "Oh, you were here for our war, were you?"

For years the antiwar left was told to be embarrassed about the sixties, put through re-education rites designed to elicit the confession that "excesses" were committed, mistakes made. Of course mistakes were made, starting with the failure to stop the war eight years earlier. We misread the larger calendar. After Tet, after the May–June events in Paris, we thought revolution was around the corner. The Tet Offensive of 1968 remains one of the great moments of the twentieth century, even though one can see in retrospect that General Giap's desperate throw signaled the fact that the Americans had indeed been successful in exterminating—the appropriate word, no?—the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam.

"A fool is he who makes the same mistake six times," Fred Gardner used to say to me. But we make mistakes all the time, again and again, however much we try to "draw the correct lessons." Big deal. History isn't like a bus, conveniently carrying a destination sign above the windshield. Every time I look at an audience, it's filled with people who have made mistakes about the way history was headed, about the vulnerability of capitalism, but who were on the right track all the same. The most mistaken people of all are those so frightened of making mistakes they end up missing the right bus when it finally comes round the corner. A phrase I truly hate is that tag from Gramsci, "optimism of the will, pessimism of the intellect." Go for the doubleheader, I say. What's so wrong with optimism of the intellect, as well as of will, to get one out of bed in the morning?

OK, *qualified* optimism. There's no sense in getting totally carried away. One of my oldest friends, Perry Anderson, has just written in *New Left Review* that "the only starting-point for a realistic Left today is a lucid registration of historical defeat." In the same essay, a characteristically brilliant statement of renewed editorial purpose in this year's relaunch of *NLR* (now entering its fifth decade), Perry notes that amid this historical defeat leftists can opt for "accommodation," "consolation" (search for silver linings, favored occupation of present writer) or "uncompromising realism" (*NLR*'s official position). But he does add in a footnote that there is another possible reaction, "namely, resignation—in other words, a lucid recognition of the nature and triumph of the system, without either adaptation or self-deception, but also without any belief in the chance of an alternative to it." What suggests to me that this is perhaps Perry's personal preference is that he adds caustically, "A bitter conclusion of this kind is, however, rarely articulated as a public position."

There's not too much to quarrel with in Perry's exposition in an itinerary he traces from the moment in which *NLR* was born forty years ago, when a third of the world had broken with capitalism, to our present hour, with neoliberalism's world triumph. "For the first time since the Reformation," Perry writes with gloomy relish, "there are no longer any significant oppositions—that is, systematic rival outlooks—within the thought-world of the West; and scarcely any on a world scale either." But from the somber dignity of this judgment he plunges into bathos when he contrasts the incoherence of the left with the visions of the right offered in "a fluent popular style" by Fukuyama, Brzezinski, Huntington, Yergin, Luttwak, Friedman. Yes, he speaks of those same vulgar choristers of empire, all, culminating in that contemptible hack, Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*. For heaven's sake! Let's get back to optimism.

As I read these lines by Perry came news over the radio of a tree-sit in a section of the Headwaters redwood forest, here in Humboldt County. A young woman called Firebird, fresh up from San Francisco, is, at time of writing, tree-sitting forty feet up in the air. She's fixed up a rope with a noose round her neck, with the other end tied to a gate on the ground. If the loggers or their allies launch an attack, Firebird is in imminent danger of being hanged. No accommodation, consolation, resignation or uncompromising realism here. Firebird has optimism of the will *and* optimism of the intellect. I don't think many of us, back in the sixties, would have taken optimism that far. Hurrah for the Vietnamese war of liberation, hurrah for the antiwar movement, hurrah for Firebird. Hurrah for others like Firebird who battled the WTO to a standstill in Seattle last fall, and for a reprise in Washington this month, where the Ruckus Society, Direct Action Network and other insurgents have planned demonstrations and civil disobedience to shut down the IMF and World Bank meeting. Hurrah for optimism! ■

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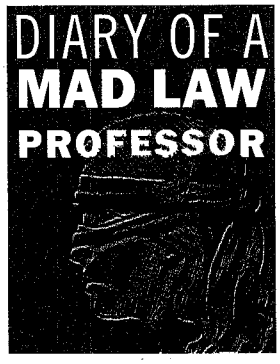
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Six Degrees of Separatism



It's been an interesting few weeks in Gotham. Police "accidentally" killed Patrick Dorismond, an unarmed Haitian security guard who had angrily rebuffed the aggressive attempts of undercover officers to engage him in a drug deal. Mayor Giuliani, displaying that pit-bull piety for which he is so renowned, responded to community outcry by releasing Dorismond's sealed juvenile record and labeling him no "altar boy."

First Lady Hillary Clinton, Giuliani's rival for New York's Senate seat, decried the Mayor's action as "leading the rush to judgment." Republican supporters of Mayor Giuliani then attacked Hillary Clinton by calling her a tool of the Rev. Al Sharpton, whom they labeled the black David Duke or, as GOP chairman Jim Nicholson said, "the Democrats' David Duke."

David Duke, of course, is the American Jörg Haider. Jörg Haider in turn is the Austrian neo-Nazi with whom Rudolph Giuliani recently shared a podium on Martin Luther King Day—all quite coincidentally, I am sure. For his part, David Duke (who once called for the extermination of Jews and for blacks to be sent back to Africa) has, in recent years, affected high-mindedness: "I'm not a racist like Jesse Jackson."

This might be read as a response to Jesse Jackson's once having referred to New York as "Hymietown," but in reality it had more to do with Duke's belief that Jackson's notion of equal rights does not include white power.

Jesse Jackson, if you recall, did publicly apologize for his anti-Semitic remarks with the kind of gallant diplomacy that qualifies him as the black John Rocker, after which former New York Mayor Ed Koch, the sophisticated pigeon's equivalent of Frank Perdue, has said "we became good friends." Recently, the two friends jointly denounced Mayor Giuliani, of whom Jackson said, "It's not just meanness; it's mental."

Speaking of mental, Mayor Giuliani has reportedly accepted a campaign contribution from NRA president Charlton Heston, the gun owners' Black Panther. The NRA recently denounced Smith & Wesson for "running up the white flag of surrender" by striking a deal with President Clinton to put safety locks on its guns. You remember President Clinton. He is, according to Toni Morrison, the first black President of the United States. His wife is Hillary Clinton, who, according to Rudolph Giuliani, has accepted campaign contributions from Puffy Combs. Puffy Combs, as you're probably aware, is the black Jesse Ventura. And of course Jesse Ventura is the bald Al Sharpton.

Back at ground zero, Al Sharpton's supporters blame the David Duke characterization upon the same Republican strategists who derailed Michael Dukakis's candidacy with the notorious Willie Horton ad. Willie Horton, as University of Colorado Professor Richard Delgado has pointed out, was a linguistic cyborg dating back to the civil rights movement, a time when charges of being a "nigger lover" were enough to get you drummed out of the country club. (Some of us optimists remain hopeful that in an era when Thomas Jefferson is revealed to have been "the white Willie Horton," any such mudslinging will be greeted with more thoughtfulness and reserve this time around.)

In any event, Republican spinmeisters have their hands full these days with George Bush the younger. In answer to questions posed in a TV interview Governor Bush generously pushed the envelope of Christian brotherhood when he implied that the Nation of Islam was one of the world's great religions. We shall assume Bush meant just plain old Islam, rather than the Nation of Islam, which is headed by none other than Louis Farrakhan, the black Pat Robertson. Nevertheless, if Dan Quayle was the white Amos'n'Andy, then surely this little gaffe qualifies George W. as the Alamo state's Dan Quayle.

Meanwhile, spinmeisters in the black community have been busy too. My favorite is the image of Rudolph Giuliani as "the white Dennis Rodman" inasmuch as they are both hotheaded and share a predilection for cross-dressing. And at a party recently, I heard Latrell Sprewell called "the black Rudy Giuliani"—he roughs up his coaches when they get on his nerves yet is considered by loyal fans who value ends over means to be "doing a good job."

It's such fun, this name-calling, that you could almost forget that there are real issues at stake.

But if we are so easily divided by such labels, is there no way to get beyond them? I don't think there are easy answers, but a wise friend of mine points out that one of the interesting things about the notorious remarks John Rocker made about New Yorkers is that they were for the most part not specific but largely implied. Wouldn't it be interesting, he suggested, to imagine the categorizations he used in unexpected ways?

After all, this is New York: The young "mom with four kids" could be an Albanian refugee. The "kid with purple hair" could be the creator of an e-commerce fortune. The "dude who got out of jail" could be a doctor who was strung out on so much speed that he shortened the lives of multiple patients. Just for the sake of amusement let's assume further that they're all friends and traveling to the same Thai/Puerto Rican wedding. That the tense drug dealer over there, the skinny one with the dark glasses, is an Upper East Side matron. And that the resentful-looking kid in the baseball cap and too-big pants, who's on his way to nowhere in particular because he's got the short end of a bad education and isn't in any mood to be messed with because he just missed a job interview at McDonald's because he got stopped by the police, who said they were just doing their job and his——

Hey, what gives? You're describing that young black male over there, slouched at the end of the subway car. What happened to the parody? Where's the ironic inversion?

Not everything's a joke. Look closer.

Er...a young black man?

Even closer.

Oh, my goodness. A decent human being. ■

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ERIC ALTERMAN

Still With Us

The editors of *The New York Times Magazine* had a good idea recently. They noticed that poor people had pretty much disappeared from the media's picture of American society but not, of course, from society itself. The editors came up with a plan to present a modern photographic essay of real people, with none of that Walker Evans/Dorothea Lange–type ennobling-of-the-poor-by-casting-them-in-granite stuff. Moreover, they hoped to give these people a chance to speak of their feelings about the rich, who, judging by the media coverage, suddenly meant "everyone." To accompany the essay, the editors asked James Fallows to write an article covering the opposite end of the spectrum, speaking to the newly wealthy about just what they saw as their responsibility to the poor.

Fallows's essay succeeded in illustrating the uncomfortable fact that for many of the new rich, the poor have simply ceased to exist as much more than a nuisance. But according to editor Adam Moss, the interview subjects did not yield up any useful material about how the poor viewed the new rich. So difficult and all-encompassing was the simple task of making it through each day that they didn't really have the time or inclination to ruminate about them. So the photographs were forced to speak for themselves and, next to Fallows's essay, ended up communicating a mixed and ultimately rather confusing message. The poor were no longer exactly invisible, but neither—at least in this case—did they have an articulate voice of their own.

When Michael Harrington published *The Other America* in 1962, mainstream culture was still willing to accept some responsibility for the plight of the poor and to listen to them in trying to craft potential solutions. Today, however, conservative ideologues have managed to shape the assumptions of the debate so effectively that the problem of poverty has been decided—as if by decree—to be one exclusively of character, thereby absolving the rest of us of any responsibility.

While the media are once again picking up the story of poverty, they are still having difficulty communicating the problems of the poor in their own voices. The *Times*'s Jason DeParle, arguably the best poverty reporter in America, has been on leave for most of this year to write a book on welfare reform, leaving a big hole in the paper of record's coverage. (The networks appear to have given up entirely.) The *Times* recently reported, on page A20, on a new HUD study revealing that 5.4 million low-income families are paying more than half their income for housing or living in dilapidated units, a rise of 12 percent since 1991. The story quoted HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo and Republican Rick Lazio but no actual low-income people. Similarly, while we do hear frequently of the 43 million Americans who lack health insurance, rarely do we read or hear about what it's like to raise a sick child without it.

Again, thoughtful, engaging reporting on the poor is neither easy nor profitable and hence does not appeal to media conglomerates and their talk-show bookers. Most poor people do not speak in clever soundbites and would not be able to hold the interest of a Chris Matthews or a Cokie Roberts long enough to say their names. But a number of independent-minded reporters have demonstrated of late that even in our new gilded age, this is an important story with powerful implications even for those who do not worry about becoming poor anytime soon. In addition to DeParle's work, and that of columnists like Juan Gonzalez and Bob Herbert, not to mention Katherine Boo's prizewinning coverage for the *Washington Post*, there has been some fine reporting in alternative publications like *Southern Exposure*. Even trendy, glossy *Esquire* recently published Charles Pierce's brilliant take on the life-and-death impact of cuts in the Supplemental Security Income program, along with the irresponsible role played by big-time reporters like Bob Woodward and Chris Wallace in blowing up another "waste, fraud and abuse" scandal that simply wasn't there. Still, it's a hell of a day for the Republic when the media figure most consistently identified with writing about the plight of the poor is named Arianna Huffington.

No doubt the most ambitious reporting on the subject can be found in the recent Bill Moyers PBS broadcast, *Surviving the Good Times*. Having won the confidence of two remarkable working-class families in Milwaukee, Moyers's producers have been filming their lives for the past decade, amassing more than 200 hours of tape. In the life stories of the Neumann and Stanley families, viewers see layoffs, lost benefits, hospitalizations and family fights, as well as a mother watching the first child on either side of her family graduate from high school. These are the kinds of people with whom few in the media have any direct experience.

The program's painful irony was that these families embody exactly the values to which our political culture pretends to pay tribute. Tony Neumann loses his union job when Briggs & Stratton picks up and moves south to chase cheap labor. We observe the way his loss of self-respect eats away at his ability to be a good father and husband. The family turns to their church for spiritual support. When Tony does get a job, he is so deep in debt that he has to accept work on the night shift, creating another kind of family burden. His teenage daughter complains that she sees her father for one hour a day, when he is "crabby and irritable" and no help with her homework. His wife becomes an armored-truck driver, and they grumble that they never sleep together anymore: "It stinks." Across town, Claude Stanley's son joins the Navy in the hope of going to college afterward, while the family is stuck with usurious credit-card fees as the only way to pay his older brother's first-semester tuition.

These people's burdens increase every time Alan Greenspan raises interest rates just enough to keep Cisco soaring. Talk about invisible… This may sound like a joke, but when was the last time you heard a TV analyst—even a PBS TV analyst—comment on a Fed rate rise from the perspective of the Stanleys and the Neumanns? ■

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ARTICLES

Time to Rein in Global Finance

by WILLIAM GREIDER

The financial crisis that collapsed Asian economies in mid-1997 and then bounced around the world was a distant sideshow to most Americans until it reached Wall Street. One year later, when Russia defaulted and Brazil was engulfed by the investor panic, US financial markets plunged too, and some major American banks and brokerages were at risk (as a result of lending billions to such magical schemes as Long-Term Capital Management, the wildly overleveraged hedge fund that went bust). The Federal Reserve rushed to the fire, supervised a forgiving bailout for Long-Term Capital and swiftly cut interest rates three times to restore confidence. The giddy boom resumed, but the US establishment was rattled. Led by the President, important voices from financial and academic circles began to talk earnestly about the need to reform the global financial system. "A new international financial architecture," they called it.

Nothing has been reformed. Three years after the turmoil and destruction began, the world's unstable financial system remains unchanged and, therefore, still vulnerable to all the excesses of unregulated capitalism that nearly brought it down. Another savage crisis is very likely to occur, somewhere or another, and millions of innocent bystanders will, once again, find themselves wiped out by the blind force of global finance, with its reckless, manic appetite for greater returns. For instance, because global flows of capital are now freed of any moderating controls by national governments, they can surge into a promising "emerging market" like Mexico or Indonesia, overwhelm it with easy money lent short-term for quick profits, then rush out overnight, collapsing the currency and economy. Major speculators, meanwhile, operating from unregulated offshore banking centers, gang up to attack vulnerable currencies from Britain to Malaysia and

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reap enormous windfalls by forcing them into costly, often exaggerated devaluations. An embattled country like Brazil is compelled to seek the protection of the International Monetary Fund, which will demand an austerity policy to restore the confidence of global investors (the very people whose panicky flight triggered the crisis). These and other destabilizing features of the free-market "architecture" are among the problems that have not been fixed. When another crisis does occur (perhaps closer to home), it will confirm the dereliction of the "responsibles."

So the burden of reform devolves to others—those diverse voices around the world who are uniting now in a movement to challenge the corporate-capitalist version of globalization. These active citizens, of course, have very little power to change things themselves, except their intelligence and spirit, plus an ability to arouse the broader public. This new international movement understands that the maladies of global finance go deeper than recurring crises and the danger of a total breakdown. For decades, the poorer countries have lived with harsh dictation from global capital about what economic plans their governments may or may not pursue in behalf of citizens, with brutal discipline if they stray. The cheerleaders describe this as globalization's "golden straitjacket"—follow our orders, and we will make you rich (someday)—but people in most societies are learning that the consequences for humanity are often quite leaden. Some people do get rich, of course, or gain wage incomes. But as millions learned in Southeast Asia, their escape from poverty was a temporary thing, hostage to the anxieties of distant investors who are oblivious to their individual efforts and aspirations.

The global financial system was devised by interested parties to serve their ends; nothing requires the rest of us to accept it.

The financial realm constitutes the commanding citadel of the global system—the benefactor that provides essential capital, the enforcer that disciplines multinational corporations as well as nations. Its imperious attitudes and amoral operating assumptions are embedded in every aspect of globalization and implicated in every complaint, from inhumane working conditions to environmental wreckage, from the erosion of national sovereignty to the gross and growing inequalities. Reforming global finance is, likewise, the most formidable challenge, since many people who can grasp the immorality of exploited labor or wanton destruction of nature are intimidated by the dense abstractions of high finance.

An essential starting point is to remember that this out-of-control global financial system is a man-made artifact, a political regime devised over many years by interested parties to serve their ends. Nothing in nature or, for that matter, in economics requires the rest of us to accept a system that is so unjust and mindlessly destructive. What follows is intended to help people think more clearly about the possibilities for reform (two previous articles, on January 31 and April 10, focused on rules to impose social-moral values on globalization and the deep economic imbalances in production and trade that drive the "race to the bottom"). Some plausible, immediate steps will be described that could impose more order and equity on global finance, also a grander vision of how the world's divergent economic interests might someday come together in a new institutional relationship that disarms the overbearing power of capital while it also reconciles tensions between rich and poor countries. We begin, however, on the narrow ground where the elite debate is located because some of its "solutions" may actually make things worse, especially for poorer countries.

The public dialogue among establishment figures started on a hopeful note, with sober pleas for "a new architecture" from Bill Clinton, Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, Tony Blair of Britain and many other influentials. Since then, the discussion has steadily narrowed and is now reduced to a single question: how to reform the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, as if those international financial institutions (the so-called IFIs) are the only problems to fix. What's left aside is the private, deregulated marketplace of global investing, lending and speculation that actually generates the instabilities and gross injustices. There are a couple of significant exceptions I will mention, but the general drift of respectable opinion is toward doing as little as possible—and doing nothing that might upset the bankers and financiers.

In Washington, the reform debate has been hijacked by the free-market right-wingers in Congress and elsewhere, who propose to eviscerate the IMF and the World Bank, severely reducing the scope of their lending and their authority to intervene in crises. The loan windows would be effectively closed to most poor nations, and discretionary decision-making would be replaced with fixed and very conservative rules. The right portrays the fund and the bank as out-of-control bureaucracies that have stealthily accumulated functions far beyond the original purposes of the Bretton Woods agreement that created them a half-century ago. In the reconstruction following World War II, the IMF's initial role was to be the mediating agency that insured stable, fixed currencies. The World Bank did investment lending to rebuild war-devastated economies and to help poor countries begin development. It is certainly true that in recent decades, both institutions have been transformed and both often make things worse for countries they are supposedly helping, imposing on them the conservative economic dogma known as the "Washington consensus."

But the right-wingers make an additional complaint: The IMF actually causes financial crises—by encouraging investors to take imprudent risks in the belief that the IMF will come to their rescue with a bailout—and its functions must be sharply limited. Among their fanciful claims, the right-wingers promise that if another major financial collapse does occur, the IMF will be prohibited from executing the kind of big-package bailouts employed for Mexico in 1995 and Southeast Asia in 1997.

The right-wingers' anti-IFI message appeals to many social activists on the left, and some have signed on to the conservative agenda on the assumption that anything that weakens the IMF and the World Bank is a big step in the right direction. I share their critique of the IFIs, but their logic seems to me quite naïve about the actual power relationships in the global system. I suspect they may come to regret making common cause with the likes of Senator Phil Gramm, who, as conservative chairman of the Senate bank-

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ing committee, can do great damage under the banner of reform.

The right wing's prescriptions are contained in the recent report from the International Financial Institution Advisory Commission, created by Congress in 1998 to critique the IFIs and recommend changes (the chairman is Professor Allan Meltzer of Carnegie Mellon, a hard-money disciple of Milton Friedman who regularly scolds the Federal Reserve for being too lax). Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, perhaps anticipating the right's line of attack, has called for a moderate scaling back, but Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs is providing liberal cover for the right-wingers. A leading IMF critic and Democratic appointee to the IFI commission, Sachs enthusiastically endorsed the conservative recommendations (while privately assuring friends that he disagrees with the more odious elements).

At the risk of sounding soft on the IFIs, I observe that the right has grossly rewritten recent history in order to blame them and absolve private capital. The IMF and the World Bank have indeed expanded and contorted their purpose enormously over the past two decades, but in every important instance they've done so at the behest of the US Treasury, responding to urgent demands from private banking and finance, mainly the major US banks and brokerages. In the Third World debt crisis of the eighties, IFI lending assisted the massive, silent bailout of leading banks like Chase and Citicorp (now Citigroup), which allowed private banks to back out of huge portfolios of failed loans yet left the indebted countries of Latin America in even worse shape (a negative wealth transfer, from poor to rich, totaling $116 billion). In the nineties the $50 billion bailout of Mexico was engineered by Rubin and Summers, not the IMF, which as always followed Treasury's orders (a rescue for the customers at Merrill Lynch and Goldman Sachs, among other firms). The Asia and Russia bailouts were likewise driven by US policy-makers and financiers. The IFIs are agents of global capital, not the masters.

If the two Bretton Woods institutions were abolished tomorrow, the punishing chaos and inequities in global finance would continue—and might be amplified by panicky investors—since these disorders originate in financial markets, driven by powerful private interests and their self-serving doctrine of lawless free markets. The right-wingers, along with Jeffrey Sachs, are being cute when they pretend to recommend no more bailouts. As they well know, if the next crisis is large and threatening enough, the IMF, World Bank, Fed and other major central banks will again intervene as lenders of last resort—regardless of anybody's promises—since "letting nature take its course" might risk a total meltdown.

Developing countries, meanwhile, will find themselves in a new straitjacket, probably harsher than the present one, if the right's agenda prevails. The Meltzer-Sachs commission's majority insists, for instance, that the IMF lend only to "prequalified" nations that pass certain tests of soundness—that is, adopt conservative economic policies and deregulate domestic financial systems so that foreign banks and brokerages are free to enter and dominate them. Thus the US financial industry might accomplish through this back door what it has long sought in formal trade negotiations, like the controversial Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which was stymied only by vigorous grassroots opposition from many nations. The Meltzer-Sachs proposals contain other neocolonial features that are most unfriendly to the poor.

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The political plans of the right may also threaten—even derail—the energetic global campaign under way to win debt relief for the very poorest nations. Senator Gramm and allies intend to attach the Meltzer-Sachs prescriptions to upcoming legislation needed to approve debt relief. If they succeed, Jubilee 2000 could be held hostage, even stalemated, by Congressional right-wingers insisting on their version of reform.

The global financial marketplace resembles a Wild West territory where bankers and big ranchers try to establish law and order among the populace while exempting themselves (since they write the laws in the first place). In this metaphor, the IMF plays sheriff and hanging judge, dispensing commandments and punishment on behalf of wealthy patrons while absorbing the wrath of angry citizens. Reforming the IFIs, including attempts to insert labor and environmental rights into their lending conditions, may be a noble project, but it will almost surely fail unless this underlying contradiction is confronted and altered. What this territory needs is new laws that regulate the behavior of the powerful, that extend due process and equal protection to the weak as well as the mighty.

Much of the current disorder will be remedied if wealthy nations abandon laissez-faire and accept the need to restore fairness.

The great fiction promoted by the free-market gurus—that national governments are powerless to assert themselves in this new world—has always been nonsense but widely believed. The myth is now being refuted, concretely, by legislation introduced by a respected establishment Republican. Representative Jim Leach, the moderately conservative chairman of the House banking committee, has proposed a measure to assert the influence of US banking regulation over the galaxy of offshore banking centers—the secretive, unregulated outposts where "dirty money" from drugs and crime mingles with respectable capital from hedge funds, major banks and wealthy investors. Leach's proposal is the most meaningful step toward genuine reform that I've observed (actually the only one) and ought to inspire reform activists to explore the broader implications.

Last year Leach was powerfully offended by the scandalous money traffic through the Cayman Islands and other offshore havens that allowed Russian oligarchs to spirit away many billions and deposit the loot in the Bank of New York (possibly the same billions the IMF had lent to the Russian government, though that's not yet proved). Leach discovered that in one year some $70 billion was transferred from Russian accounts through a tiny island in the Pacific Ocean called Nauru, population 11,000. Last fall Leach drafted regulatory legislation that could put a stop to these financial games, or at least force them into the daylight. The so-called brass-plate banks, typically existing only as computers set up in obscure locations, are more than an arcane gimmick, because they channel huge volumes of global capital, especially from the major speculators, outside official scrutiny from any government.

Banks in the United States, Leach asserted, should be prohibited from accepting any of these blind transfers from money shops if they cannot establish that the money originated from a truly regulated institution that is, in fact, a real bank (the Clinton Administration introduced a competing version after the financial industry complained about Leach's). The issue exposes a central hypocrisy of international finance—a system that demands "transparency" and "due diligence" from banks in developing nations while all the best names in international finance use these irregular outposts. The offshore money, whether clean or dirty, enjoys the same benefits: avoidance of national laws and regulation as well as avoidance of taxes (global tax-avoidance schemes may cost hundreds of billions in lost revenues; no one really knows).

Despite the complexities of global finance, the operating cortex is relatively small and easily accessible to government regulators—five dozen or so international banks that handle the foreign-exchange transfers for everyone else. Nearly all are based in the wealthiest economies, supervised and regulated by their national governments. The politics is straightforward: Write tough new rules for these leading banks and everyone else must observe them (unless they choose not to do any banking with the world's principal centers of financial wealth).

New rules are needed to create more financial stability and equity, but, ultimately, banking regulation can also be a discreet instrument for upholding social values—public needs for housing, healthcare, education—since the regulation implicitly influences access to credit (which borrowers are preferred, which shut out). Not all of the issues can be reached by national legislation alone, but much of the disorder will be swiftly remedied if the wealthiest nations, especially the United States, abandon the crumbling dogma of laissez-faire and accept the obligation to restore fairness. Here is a brief sampling of some possibilities proposed by various reformers:

§ Shut off or shut down the offshore banking centers, both to curb speculation and recapture lost revenues for national governments. Leach's proposal is a modest first step toward establishing the standard of law. Tax-dodging and money-laundering are financial issues that every citizen can understand.

§ Allow nations to impose their own controls on short-term capital flows in order to disarm the "hot money," those frantic capital surges in and out of countries that have triggered so many crises. The Council on Foreign Relations, an old establishment outpost, recommended as much in a study group co-chaired by two other Republican notables, Peter Peterson, Richard Nixon's Commerce Secretary, and Carla Hills, George Bush's US Trade Representative. Their recommendation departs from orthodoxy but is not as radical as it sounds. Chile, after all, has been allowed to do this. It successfully discourages short-term lending from abroad with a stiff holding-period tax that severely penalizes early withdrawals (shorter than a year's duration). The United States and other powers simply have to tell the IMF to back off and let emerging economies use such insulating devices, perhaps even incentives like Chile's that direct longer-term capital to the nation's own priorities. One wonders, in passing, why the Clinton Administration is so shy about the issue of capital controls when the Council on Foreign Relations has provided establishment cover.

§ Create a quasi-public international investment fund that directs major volumes of long-term capital to developing countries and thus allows them to escape the dictates of investors

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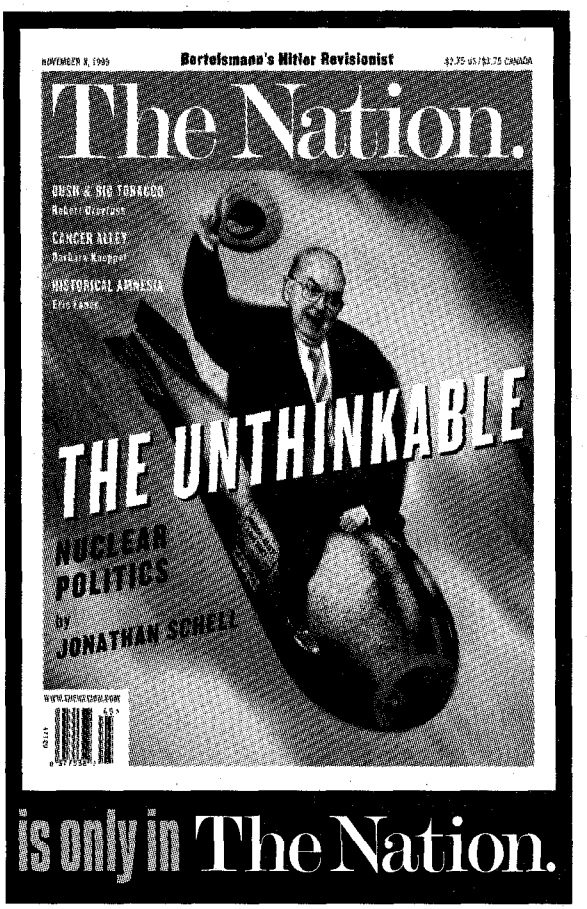

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and economic doctrines imposed by the IMF. A broadly diversified fund, including private and public investors, professionally managed to produce healthy returns, would bring patience to the process of globalization—stable capital that is not beholden to the quarterly earnings of multinational corporations or the feverish mood swings of financial markets. Governments might set forth the broad principles, but the fund would have to establish that patient capital can compete profitably (precisely why private capital loathes the idea). Jane D'Arista of the Financial Markets Center (her work is available at www.fmcenter.org) has proposed a closed-end international fund that would function like a giant mutual fund, but with a sense of history. An alternative version would raise its capital from a modest tax on global financial transactions and might gradually displace the World Bank as the leading development lender. Either way, the goal is to give aspiring nations more freedom from the fickle financial markets, while assuring the capital inflows they need to develop.

The IMF ought to be phased out, but that's unlikely until a new, more democratic institution is created to replace it.

In the meantime, governments should prohibit the World Bank from financing any more oil, gas or mining projects—40 percent of the World Bank Group's loan portfolio last year, according to Friends of the Earth and other environmental groups. These generate environmental destruction and social upheaval in developing countries while often propping up corrupt regimes. Private capital should take these risks, not taxpayers.

§ Create a new international bankruptcy court to arbitrate claims between creditors and defaulting nations and provide protective workouts so indebted countries aren't destroyed in the process. The present system, loosely supervised by the IMF, central banks and various clubs of private bankers, is utterly one-sided. The fallen nations are steadily bled, their remaining assets picked over by scavenging investors, while foreign creditors walk away with no responsibility for their own mistakes. A global bankruptcy system for nations would develop equitable principles for settlements and terms of lending that could be incorporated in every debt instrument of global finance, the legal language that establishes the obligations of bankers and bondholders as well as their borrowers. This reform is a more reliable response to the problem of "moral hazard"—investors who take irresponsible gambles because they believe governments will bail them out—than anything the free-marketeers have suggested. Professor Kunibert Raff of the University of Vienna has proposed that nongovernmental organizations, trade unions and civic groups participate to speak for the affected citizens in bankrupt nations.

§ Confront and engage the long, difficult task of constructing a new international system that assures stable relationships among national currencies. The present system of floating exchange rates, with its exaggerated swings in currency values, is a central source of global instability as well as a movable feast for speculators. With everyone linked to the continuing gyrations of major currencies, the damage is randomly transmitted: US interest rates rise and trigger a collapse of the peso in Mexico or the baht in Thailand. Unpredictable exchange rates lead multinationals to disperse factories so they can hedge currency shifts by bumping their output from one country to another. This rudderless free market—$1.5 trillion a day in foreign-exchange transactions—wastes enormous amounts of capital in unproductive games, while the intimidating instability also retards growth rates in the advanced industrial nations.

These are not radical complaints, but points that conservative authorities like Paul Volcker have made in calling for reforms to stabilize the world's currency relationships. Unlike previous examples, this problem cannot be easily fixed, and certainly not by a single nation. Managing the international stability of currencies was the original purpose of the IMF, but that function was wiped out three decades ago when Nixon unilaterally discarded the Bretton Woods system and accepted Milton Friedman's idea of floating exchange rates—money values determined, every day, in the marketplace. The triumph of laissez-faire produced the present turmoil. The IMF ought to be phased out, but that's unlikely until a new, more democratic institution is created to replace it. Big players can hedge against unpredictable losses, but people can't hedge their lives, their societies. Global finance needs a supervisory governor that everyone can trust.

Set aside current realities and imagine a different future: Every nation, rich or poor, conducts foreign trade in its own currency and, therefore, gains greater ability to steer its own national economic policies. The dollar and the euro, perhaps joined by the yen, serve as the most reliable anchors but no longer swing wildly in value against one another, damaging producers and workers on one end or the other. Poorer nations, exporting and importing in their own currencies, are no longer compelled to raise "hard currency" reserves to pay back foreign loans; thus they are free to move away from the model of export-led growth and concentrate more on domestic development. Exchange rates among the currencies still fluctuate in value, actively influenced by market forces, but the speculators have lost their best game. The extraordinary volumes of currency trading subside; the "hot money" finds less opportunity to panic. The rhythms of globalization become less volatile and randomly destructive, as investors discover that the best returns require investing with a longer perspective. Finance capital no longer acts like an imperious master, but only as one important agent in capitalism's processes of wealth creation.

All this is entirely plausible, but to reach this future one has to accept the need to create some kind of new governing authority for global finance. The most ambitious and persuasive plan I have encountered was designed by financial economist Jane D'Arista. The improvements described above are what D'Arista foresees as possible if the world undertakes a fundamental reordering. Someday, I predict, political leaders will be compelled to consider something like this, though I fear it may require a bloody catastrophe to get their attention.

Many reformers will object that this subject is wildly premature, too abstract for citizens to grasp, too distant from present politics to engage their scarce energies. Besides, they will say, does anyone really want a new, more powerful IMF? I disagree. Thinking ahead in larger terms can give self-confidence to this new movement. Asking hard questions about the future forces people to clarify their vision. Besides,

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governing elites are much too timid to think big for us.

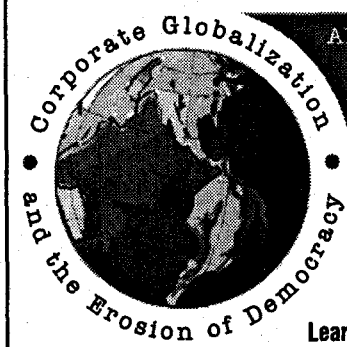
D'Arista's concept borrows from John Maynard Keynes and Harry Dexter White, co-architects of the original Bretton Woods arrangement, but the operating principles are adapted to the greater, faster complexities of today. She calls this new institution an "International Clearing Agency" because it would act as the currency clearinghouse for payments in international trade (the place where exporters and importers exchange one nation's currency for another's). Banks would do the exchanges for them, much the way they use the Federal Reserve as a clearinghouse for all US banking transactions. The ICA would not be a true central bank, since it wouldn't have the power to create money, but many features and functions would be similar. Like a central bank, it would hold the world's reserves, backed by marketable financial assets deposited by the participating nations. This financial base would give it the power to act as lender of last resort in major emergencies and provide temporary liquidity loans to countries in difficulty (just as the Fed routinely lends to commercial banks).

The ICA's central function, however, would be a balancing act among nations and their currencies—keeping the exchange values of currencies within agreed-upon ratios. If a nation tried to capture artificial advantage by letting its currency stray, it would be nudged back in line by its shrinking reserves at the ICA and eventually compelled, more or less automatically, to correct its economic imbalances or face a formal devaluation. Thus the ICA would adjust and stabilize the flows much as the original IMF did. Other times, it would help a country deal with unexpected shocks like commodity-price gyrations or natural disasters. Overall, the agency could discreetly counter the runaway surges in financial activity, just as the Fed is supposed to do. Defending the safety and soundness of the system is in everyone's interest, not just private investors. It's an alternative to the Wild West.

Such an institution would have awesome power, no question about it, but less awesome and arbitrary, I think, than the unaccountable powers that private capital randomly asserts, for self-interested profit, over the affairs of nations. Smaller countries, ironically, might find D'Arista's scheme more attractive because it promises them more sovereign space to pursue their own ideas of economic development. The centers of financial wealth—especially the United States—would likely be the skeptics, since it requires them to surrender much of their ability to manipulate and dominate others. When the United States developed into a truly national economy in the late nineteenth century, it suffered repeated, disastrous financial upheavals that eventually persuaded politicians, albeit reluctantly, to accept the need for a central bank. The question now is whether the world has yet had enough of the chaos and profiteering to accept something similar.

The toughest challenge concerns democratic governance, not financial design. Who would run and control this institution? Wouldn't the same old crowd take over and use it to bully others, as with the IMF? D'Arista has some tentative answers. She proposes a rotating executive committee whose members must insure representation on two levels—population and economic output—so that at least half the world's population would be represented at the table, as would nations that, combined, account for at least half the world's economic output. I suggest two additional levels of representation—the world's regions

WHOSE TRADE ORGANIZATION?



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and the people at large themselves. It's not practical, obviously, to have a popular assembly supervising the global financial system, but here's a radical thought: Why not elections? I can imagine a regular worldwide referendum in which people everywhere vote directly to express themselves—thumbs-up or thumbs-down—on the ICA's performance. A negative vote would force a change in the leadership, much as in parliamentary systems. The same principles might be useful for restructuring control of the IMF and the World Bank (while they exist) or, for that matter, the United Nations and other international forums that lack credibility and power because they do not truly reflect world realities.

These are just ideas, of course. But if nations are serious about the notion that globalization can lead to worldwide democracy, we ought to look at distant horizons and begin asking ourselves how this new democracy might work. The vision is simple: putting people first, instead of behind capital. ■

BOTH COMMON SENSE AND MORALITY DICTATE THAT WE HELP TO END THE DEBT CRISIS.

Jubilee 2000: Paying *Our* Debts

ROBERT W. EDGAR

A massive natural disaster reminds us why people worldwide have been engaged by the issue of debt relief. Mozambique, along with several Southern African neighbors, faces years of reconstruction in the wake of recent storms and floods that government officials say did more damage than sixteen years of civil war. Although Mozambique has been granted some debt relief in recent years, when the storms struck it was still paying $1.4 million a week in interest. Mozambique has been granted a temporary moratorium on its debt payments, but it will still have to pay its creditors back. It is due for additional debt relief in April, but this may be delayed if Congress doesn't contribute.

SCOTT STOWELL

The reality in highly indebted countries is grim. Half of Africa's population—about 300 million people—live without access to basic healthcare or a safe water source. In Tanzania, where 40 percent of the population dies before age 35, the government spends nine times more on foreign debt payments than on healthcare. In 1997, before Hurricane Mitch, Nicaragua spent more than half its revenue on debt payments. Until recently, it has taken countries in structural adjustment programs six or more years to get debt relief. For lenders this seems like common sense—make sure the country has its economic house in order before canceling debts—but the human cost is tremendous. Six years is a child's entire elementary school education. If governments are forced to cut subsidies for public education and charge fees that make schooling too expensive for the poor, it cheats a whole generation of children.

In contrast, in countries where some debt relief has already been provided there is evidence of the potential benefits. For example, Uganda established a Poverty Action Fund, into which it pledged to deposit all the savings from debt relief. One goal is achieving universal primary education. With the resources freed from debt relief, combined with other sources, primary school enrollment has more than doubled, to 5.3 million children since 1997.

Concern about the need to provide deeper and faster debt relief gave rise to an international movement—under the banner of Jubilee 2000—to cancel the debt of the poorest countries by the end of this year. Grounded in biblical mandates of jubilee calling for the forgiveness of debt, the freeing of slaves and the return of lands so as not to perpetuate generations of impoverishment, this movement seeks to promote meaningful debt cancellation for the world's poorest nations in order to reduce poverty and prevent further environmental degradation. There are now Jubilee 2000 campaigns in more than sixty countries, creditor and debtor alike. We in the faith community here in the United States have added our voice to those of other religious leaders, including Pope John Paul II and Bishop Desmond Tutu, who have eloquently stated the principles being raised by their churches regarding the need to set economic relations right. Almost all the major religious bodies in the United States—including Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim—are working together on this initiative. This commitment crosses the spectrum: Even the Revs. Billy Graham and Pat Robertson have endorsed the need to provide debt relief to poor countries.

Providing debt cancellation also makes good common sense. For example, there is a direct relationship between the debt and rampant deforestation, as governments sell off natural resources and chop down forests to plant cash crops to earn foreign currency. The drug trade is protected in many countries because it provides valuable foreign currency for their interest payments. And the United States is losing out on future markets of hundreds of millions of people that so far remain unable to afford basic schooling, much less to buy products made in America.

Jubilee 2000 has placed the issue of debt relief at the forefront of the international development agenda. The human consequences of poor countries' debt burden have become a moral concern for millions of US citizens. Over the past two years, organizations and individuals across the country have sought to address this concern through study groups, worship services, local events, petition campaigns, letters to the editor and contacts

The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Edgar is general secretary of the National Council of Churches, New York. An ordained United Methodist elder, he just concluded ten years as president of the Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, California. He served Pennsylvania's Seventh District in the US House of Representatives from 1975 to 1987.

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with public officials. All this has brought the debt issue from almost total obscurity to the level of a national crusade.

Because of this pressure, last summer in Cologne, Germany, the leaders of the G-7 nations committed to expanding an existing debt-relief measure and insuring a focus on poverty reduction. President Clinton subsequently submitted a budget request to Congress that would provide almost $1 billion for the US share. Congress approved part of this request last November.

Creditors must take responsibility for being part of the cause for this crisis. During the cold war our government and other lenders loaned to many countries for purely political purposes. Loans went to corrupt leaders for no clear development purpose. Yes, debt relief comes at a cost to creditors, but perhaps this is a debt we owe as well. Additionally, because the United States expects to collect only a fraction of the value of the original loan, the debts can be written off at a significant discount. About $1 billion from the United States would leverage nearly $100 billion in debt relief for poor countries over the next four years.

It's critically important that Congress appropriate more funding for debt relief, and soon. There is not enough money in the World Bank's Highly Indebted Poor Countries Trust Fund to cover the countries eligible for debt relief this year. Several creditor nations' pledges are contingent on the US contribution. In order to make sure that indebted countries don't have to wait until October 2000 to start getting relief, President Clinton has asked Congress to include money for debt cancellation in its supplemental budget. He has also included a request in the FY2001 budget to cover the additional funds needed until FY2003. Approval of the full $810 million could bring debt relief to as many as thirty-three countries by 2003. The ideal would be both to expand this list and to deepen the level of debt cancellation, but fulfilling the commitments made in Cologne is a critical first step.

On March 30 the House passed a $12.7 billion emergency supplemental appropriation, with $7.7 billion more than the Administration requested. It included funding for Colombian drug wars, Kosovo peacekeeping, North Carolina flood relief and healthcare benefits for military personnel, but not a dime for debt relief. It does not look like debt relief will be in the Senate version, either. Some members of Congress have tried to explain this by questioning whether it is an emergency. Mozambique's condition certainly refutes that interpretation.

Further distracting attention from debt relief is debate on the Congressionally appointed Meltzer commission's recommendations for major changes to the IMF, World Bank and regional development-banking system. Congress's focus on reforming the international financial architecture, while important, comes at the expense of attention to debt relief. We would remind Congress that one of the commission's few unanimous recommendations was that debt cancellation for the world's poorest countries by all the international financial institutions should be a priority. Eleven countries are expected to be eligible for debt relief within the next two months, but they won't get anything until Congress appropriates its share of the package. The people who suffer the most from this delay are the most vulnerable people in the world—the victims of devastating floods in Mozambique, rural farmers in Uganda, schoolchildren in Bolivia. ■

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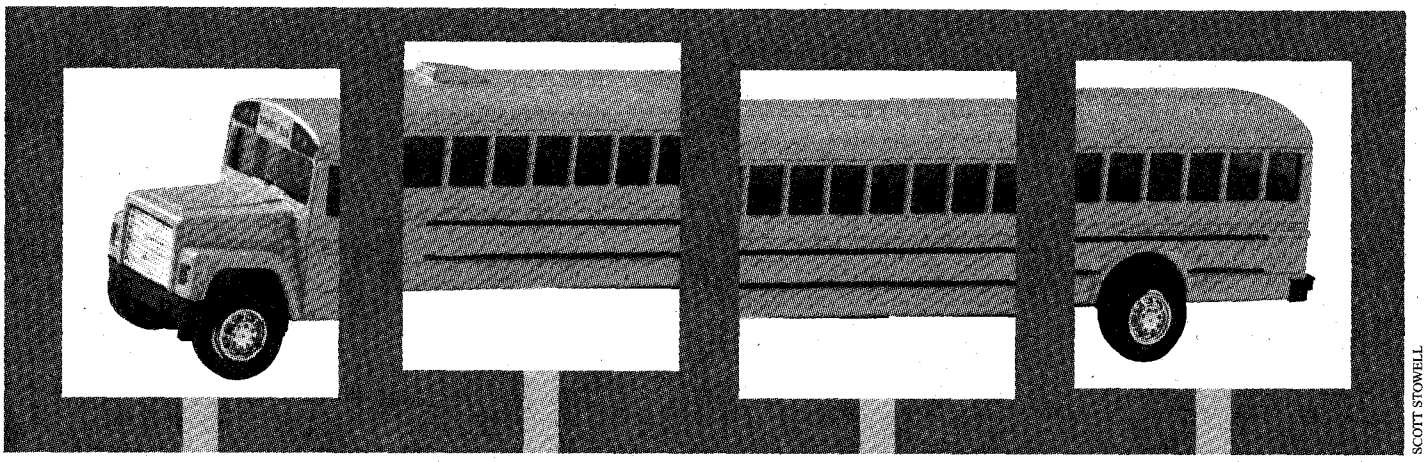

SCOTT STOWELL

Raising a Ruckus: Students Take the Bus to DC

JANE SPENCER

Students heading for DC are bringing more than a toothbrush and a change of underwear. E-mails circulating among campus activists recommend "bandannas soaked in vinegar" to serve as substitute gas masks and "sealed goggles, like swimmers' (available by prescription)" to protect eyes from tear gas and pepper spray. Items in the "optional" section of the list include a chemical/gas respirator, tampons for nose bleeds and Arnica 6c, a homeopathic remedy for trauma and shock.

With a unifying battle cry of "corporate reform" and a packing list borrowed from Desert Storm, students from up and down the Eastern Seaboard (and from as far away as California) are gearing up for large-scale, direct-action protests during the World Bank/International Monetary Fund meeting.

"These corporate-backed institutions are telling impoverished people, 'We don't give a fuck about you,'" says Manju Rajendra, a 19-year-old organizer from Durham, North Carolina. "They're saying, 'We don't care if you have food, a roof or a chance for education.'" Rajendra will join an estimated 2,000–6,000 young activists (hard numbers are impossible to pin down) to rally against the IMF's structural-adjustment programs, which force poor nations to cut social spending in order to pay back debt to Western nations.

"Seattle proved that these protests have resonance," says Terra Lawson-Remer, a Yale senior and a national organizer for the Student Alliance to Reform Corporations (STARC). She says she's observed an attitude shift on campus in just the past year: "We actually have people at our meetings now. People are finally getting it. They're seeing that everything they do or care about is impacted by corporate power." Yale student groups expect to charter at least three buses for the trip, and they'll be joining a larger Connecticut delegation that could reach over a thousand.

STARC is one of two well-organized national student groups that have launched campaigns to bring young activists to DC. The other is United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), which was founded in 1998 and has already had substantial success in its efforts to stop universities from buying sweatshop-produced apparel for sports teams and campus shops. USAS has chapters at more than 160 campuses in the United States and Canada. STARC, officially launched just five months ago, already has a database of about 2,000 members and a presence at 130 schools. STARC's projects include pressuring colleges to invest their endowments in socially responsible companies. Both groups harness students' existing power as consumers and investors to influence corporate policy.

The Internet has been an essential tool in these rapid, nationwide organizing efforts. "We don't have any money, but it's not a problem at all," says STARC's Lawson-Remer. "We post all of our information and training packets on the web so campus groups can just download them. Almost every student has access to a computer." Pamphlets, fact sheets and poster art for the April 16 event are available through www.a16.org, a website devoted to organizing the DC protests. Students have also used activist listservs to hammer out logistics for the DC trip. A College of the Atlantic student in Bar Harbor, Maine, used the STARC e-group to circulate an ad for cheap e-saver plane fares to DC, while a student in Olney, Maryland, offered up her floor space for ten to fifteen students (preferably vegan).

In preparation for DC, some students skipped Cancun in March to attend "Alternative Spring Break," hosted by the Ruckus Soci-

Jane Spencer, a recent graduate of Brown University, is a Nation *intern.*

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ety in Arcadia, Florida. There they learned to scale sixty-foot scaffolding to hang protest banners and practiced locking arms to prevent police from pulling them apart. Ruckus, described as "boot camp for civil disobedience," trains young activists in techniques for nonviolent direct action. Many Ruckus-trained activists were in the front lines at Seattle. The group is funded by private donors, including cable mogul Ted Turner, and was founded by veteran ruckus-raiser and Greenpeace activist Mike Roselle (Roselle's most famous stunt involved scaling Mount Rushmore in 1987 to hang a gas mask on George Washington to protest acid rain).

While student organizers see the IMF, World Bank and multinational companies as common villains, they diverge when it comes to solutions. "Some of us want huge changes in the existing institutions, others want them abolished completely," says Dennis Markatos, a junior at the University of North Carolina. However, he says, students are coming to understand the value of coalition-building as demonstrated in their success in Seattle and in antisweatshop campaigns. And all agree, he says, that the current system isn't working. "This movement is saying 'Enough of this. Enough of corporate control of the global economy.'" That's why, Markatos says, students will be out in force in DC. "Almost everyone I talk to is like, 'All right, see you April 16.'" ■

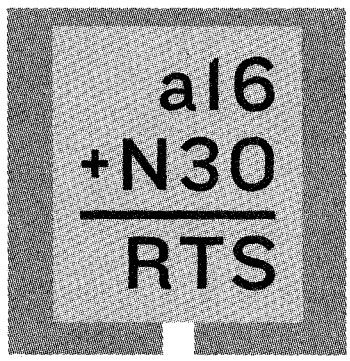
A DASH OF BRITAIN'S RAVE CULTURE HAS BROUGHT A NEW STYLE TO GLOBAL PROTESTS.

Dancing in the Streets

JOHN GHAZVINIAN

London

The slogan "Reclaim the World: www.a16.org," referring to the official website of the organizers of the protests in Washington on April 16, has recently started turning up painted on the sidewalks of New York's Lower East Side. Meanwhile, Seattle's Independent Media Center still refers with pride to the events of "N30"—the demonstrations late last year that shut down the WTO meeting.



SCOTT STOWELL

But what some US activists don't know is that terms like "a16" and "N30" are the creation of Reclaim the Streets—RTS—a London group that successfully commingles underground rave culture with social protest and whose global impact has been steadily increasing. In recent years cities as diverse as Sydney and Berlin have seen their streets shut down by festival-goers waving banners that read "Reclaim the Streets"—in English. Last June, as part of a forty-three-nation "global street party," as many as 10,000 boisterous revelers ran amok through the streets of London's financial district as the G-7 prepared to meet in Cologne. And New York's RTS, though less successful at drawing big headlines, regularly stands up to the mayor's attempts to sell off community gardens to developers.

RTS's global impact has been as formidable as it was unexpected for this band of idealists, who first came of age in 1993 when a loose collective of ravers, anticar activists and squatters converged on Claremont Road in London's East End, which was scheduled to be demolished to make room for an extension of the M11 motorway. Campaigners occupied the neighborhood for months on end, built bunkers and underground tunnels, set up impromptu art installations made out of old cars and held rooftop parties and street carnivals. "It was after Claremont Road that we discovered what sort of extraordinary things could be done if people came together," says Glen, an active London RTSer (few members give their last names), speaking of the kind of coalitions that were built in the aftermath of the takeover. The spirit of opposition was further galvanized by the passage of the hated Criminal Justice Act in 1994, which sought to impose severe limits on RTS's style of lawful assembly and even included a clause against music with a "repetitive beat."

Since then, some observers have tried to paint RTS as a shadowy, mysterious or even sinister political force, all of which RTS denies. Still, as movements go, RTS is unusual in having no leaders, no spokesmen and no official membership. It takes pride in being a "disorganization" of a few dozen core supporters who congregate weekly at a pub in north London to discuss strategy, plan activities and divide responsibilities, plus many hundreds more who turn up for demonstrations. The meeting's facilitator changes weekly, and occasionally a committee might be set up. But beyond that, there is little interest in expanding the architecture of the organization at the expense of the energy and creativity of its members.

And "creativity" may be an understatement. RTS events involve using the strength of sheer absurdity and spectacle to bring traffic to a halt on major streets, roundabouts and motorways. Typically, this is achieved by the speedy erection of a "tripod scaffold structure"—a giant, three-pronged contraption spanning the breadth of the street from the top of which one lucky RTSer is dangled for the admiration of bystanders and the distraction of police. With traffic thus shut down, live musical entertainment is then quickly bustled in, hundreds of revelers cascade onto the scene and a full-scale carnival erupts, complete with anything from bouncy castles and sandpits for children to play in to pneumatic drills digging up the pavement for a hasty tree-planting.

This idea of "reclaiming" the streets for public use from the dominance of car culture has always been central to the RTS message, but, as its formula has continued to be replicated around the world, it has become important for RTS to find ways to broaden its appeal, as well as focus its message. In 1996 that desire drew

John Ghazvinian is a graduate student and a former Murdoch Scholar at the Sunday Times *of London. He lives in Oxford.*

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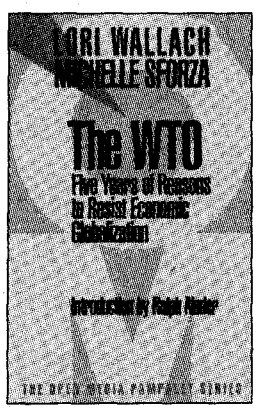

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RTS to form alliances with the striking Liverpool dockers and London Underground workers in an attempt to show the power of combining forces with Britain's "old" Labor left. The sight of union brass bands playing the "Internationale" to the accompaniment of rave music, at no less a venue than Trafalgar Square, as thousands of shaggy anarchists danced with burly dockworkers, proved to be as much of a rush of adrenaline for RTS as Seattle would later prove to be for activists on this side of the Atlantic.

One of the biggest challenges in this time of growing attention has been learning how to deal with the bleats and bellyaches of the British tabloid media, who have made use of words like "hatred," "violence" and "terror" to describe largely peaceful RTS events. For its part, RTS has responded with a healthy dose of indifference, preferring to shun reporters altogether. "On the whole, our side of the story doesn't sell newspapers," says Del, a veteran RTS member. The solution, he says, is to put out independent media like radical newspapers and Internet bulletins. Inspired in part by the success of Seattle's Independent Media Center, a newly formed RTS media group will be investing its energies in the organization's alternative-media output, which until recently was limited to the broadcast of Interference FM, a pirate radio station that preyed on the frequencies of mainstream commercial broadcasters.

In the past year RTS has slipped comfortably into its new global skin. A number of London RTS people were present in Seattle, while their website acted as a nerve center for "N30," posting reports on demonstrations not just from its own members in Seattle and London but from all over the world—from the US Embassy in Manila to the stock exchange in Brisbane, from a human chain in Dijon to a protest outside a McDonald's in Limerick. Those RTSers who stayed behind in London could listen throughout the night to a live audio feed of the Seattle Police Department's radios over the Internet.

The challenge for London RTS now becomes how to balance the desire to retain its newfound global voice with its focus on local community-based direct actions. May Day festivities this year are intended, in part, as a step in that direction. A four-day conference will culminate in a lyrically titled "guerrilla gardening" event somewhere in central London. RTS plans to target a vacant lot slated for a major corporate building project and will turn up on May Day to plant a garden in its place. Stay tuned. ■

THE NATION IN DC

On April 14 in Washington, DC, the International Forum on Globalization will present a sequel to its hugely successful Seattle Teach-In on the WTO, focusing this time on the role of the IMF and World Bank in the new, globalized economy. Cosponsored by The Nation Institute, among other groups, the teach-in runs from 10 AM to 10:30 PM at the Foundry United Methodist Church at 1500 16th Street NW. For tickets and information call (888) 629-9269 (student discounts available).

RadioNation will broadcast highlights of the Washington events as well as interviews with participants in future episodes. *The Nation*'s website will be featuring daily coverage of events, primarily through John Nichols's Online Beat (www.thenation.com/thebeat).

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CLEAN WATER AND DECENT PAY ARE NOT LUXURIES, THEY ARE RIGHTS, AND PEOPLE EVERYWHERE ARE UNITING TO DEMAND THEM. THE WHOLE WORLD WILL BENEFIT.

SCOTT STOWELL

Free Trade and the 'Starving Child' Defense: A Forum

In the wake of Seattle, defenders of the neoliberal model of development put forth what seemed to many a compelling new argument in favor of free trade. The Economist *dramatically presented this argument—in an issue whose cover bore a picture of a starving Indian child—as follows: "It is as well to be clear about who would stand to lose most if globalization really were to be pushed sharply backward—or, indeed, simply if further liberalization fails to take place. It is the developing countries. In other words, the poor." We asked four people born and raised in the Third World to respond to this argument: an academic, an activist, a poet and a trade union official. The last three pieces are edited versions of interviews conducted by* Nation *contributing editor Doug Henwood.* —*The Editors*

★

Ajit Singh

Ajit Singh, who graduated from Punjab University and obtained his PhD at the University of California, Berkeley, is professor of economics at Cambridge University. He has been a senior economic adviser to the governments of Mexico and Tanzania, and a consultant to UN organizations and the World Bank. His new book (co-edited with Candace Howes), Competitiveness Matters: Industry and Economic Performance in the US, *is forthcoming from the University of Michigan Press.*

Globalization hurts both rich and poor countries.

Academic and non-academic big guns have been wheeled out to suggest that economic globalization—which essentially means free trade and unfettered capital movements—is the only way of achieving fast material progress. The record of the advanced and developing countries under this regime, however, tells a rather different story. The economic performance of industrial countries under globalization in the eighties and nineties compares unfavorably with their record during the "golden age" of the fifties and the sixties, when most of them operated under the "illiberal" and "regulated" regime of the social-market economy at the national level and controlled capital movements at the international level. Consider:

§ GDP growth in the eighties and nineties in industrial countries has been considerably lower than that achieved in the fifties and sixties.

§ Economic growth has not only been lowered during the past two decades, it has also been more unstable, i.e., more subject to booms and busts.

§ Productivity growth in the globalization period has been half of what it was in the golden age.

§ Eight million were unemployed in the OECD countries in 1970. In 1994, there were 35 million unemployed, 10 percent of the labor force. A dramatic illustration is provided by the West German case. The average West German unemployment rate during the last decade of the golden age, 1964–1973, was, amazingly, only 1.1 percent per annum. The corresponding figure during the past ten years of globalization, 1990–1999, has been 9 percent per annum.

Proponents of globalization often suggest that the current mass unemployment in Western Europe is due largely to the inflexibility of the West European labor markets. These markets are contrasted with those of the United States, and it is argued that the superior US unemployment record in the recent period is due to its much more flexible labor markets.

A little reflection will show that the issue is more complex. To see this, consider, for example, labor markets and employment in West Germany and the United States. The former has a comparatively rigid labor market, but this is not only true today, it was true in the golden age. However, in the golden age West Germany managed to achieve full employment, while the United States did

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not. Moreover, the growth of real wages in West Germany in this earlier period was considerably faster than in the United States. The key to this puzzle lies in the fact that West Germany in that period was growing much faster than at either its current rate or that of the United States (whether now or in the earlier period).

Similarly, fast technological progress cannot be held responsible for the current European unemployment. There is indeed the revolutionary new information and communications technology (ICT) available, but its potential has not yet been realized, precisely because of the slow rate of economic advance in the globalization period. Had *actual* technological progress been faster, productivity growth should have increased and not decreased, as indicated above.

Turning to developing countries, several Asian countries have been outstandingly successful in terms of economic growth, rises in the standard of living and reduction in poverty during the past thirty years. However, contrary to neoliberal claims, countries like Japan and South Korea, during their periods of fast economic growth, did not operate under a regime of free trade and free capital movements but rather of managed trade and capital controls. Both Japan between 1950 and 1973 (when it was essentially a developing economy) and Korea in the seventies and eighties were definitely export-oriented economies. However, the important point is that although they were "open" to exports, they were not "open" to imports, i.e., they imposed fairly draconian selective-import controls. Both Japan and Korea actively discouraged foreign direct investment—while being fully open to foreign technology—and adopted a vigorous industrial policy rather than let unfettered market forces dictate the priorities and content of economic development.

When some of these highly successful East and Southeast Asian developing countries (e.g., Korea, Malaysia and Indonesia) liberalized external capital flows and undertook other far-reaching liberalization measures in the mid-nineties, they were soon plunged into huge financial crises, virtual meltdowns. Countries like China and India, which had retained considerable capital controls, were able to avoid the Asian crisis despite, in the Indian case, having "fundamentals" that were worse than those of the crisis-affected countries.

Equally significant, the Latin American countries that have obediently followed the Washington consensus since the late eighties, and liberalized their trading and external capital regimes accordingly, have not fared well either. In the nineties they have been subject to "contagion" and fallouts from a series of severe financial crises, such as the Mexican crisis of 1994–95 and the Brazilian crisis of 1999. Their long-term rate of economic growth under this regime has been only about 3 percent per annum, compared with almost 6 percent per annum in their *dirigiste* period of 1950 to 1980.

Thus economic globalization has been suboptimal from the perspective of both developing and advanced economies. The only important gainers are the multinationals and the big financial institutions, which wish to have unrestrained freedom to move capital and goods anywhere and everywhere on the planet, irrespective of its consequences for the people. Both rich and poor countries would be considerably better off under a cooperative regime of managed trade, controlled capital movements and a social-market economy than under free trade, unfettered capital movements and market supremacy.

The arguments in favor of such a policy can be summarized as follows:

§ The achievement of full employment with steady productivity growth and modestly rising real wages requires a trend increase in long-term economic growth both in the North and the South.

§ The main constraints on fast economic growth in both the North and the South do not lie on the supply side but very much on the demand side. In relation to supply, not only do there exist vast un- and underemployed human resources (i.e., people) but there is also the huge unrealized potential of the ICT revolution.

§ However, such potential growth can only be realized in practice if there is a trend increase in the rate of growth of *real* world demand. This requires at the international level a coordinated expansion by industrial countries and the introduction of special and differential treatment for developing countries in a number of key spheres.

A global Keynesian regime of managed world trade and controlled global capital movements, together with genuine international cooperation as well as more harmonious relations between employers, employees and governments nationally, is more likely to deliver both fast and high-quality growth than the current globalization regime. Thus there is not only an alternative path to globalization for the world to follow but it is also a better choice. The main obstacles to economic progress lie today in the coordination failures that prevent the attainment of the required rate of growth of real aggregate demand; such coordination failures are ubiquitous in a free-market economy. In order for the trend rate of growth of real-world demand to be compatible with production possibilities on the supply side, institutional renewal at both the national and international levels is required to resolve these coordination problems on a sustained, long-term basis.

★

Dennis Brutus

Dennis Brutus is a South African poet and activist who speaks frequently on debt and development issues. He teaches at the University of Pittsburgh.

If you look at the agenda of the WTO in Seattle and what it was hoping to accomplish, it was really an expansion of its current program—penetration of the developing nations, further expansion of corporate power there and continued and accelerated exploitation of those regions. So, contrary to the claim that the poor lost out in the failure of the talks, I would say that we saved the developing world from being even more exploited than it is at the present time. Our position from the South is: We're going to restart; we've got to rethink and above all try to change the relationship between the South and the developed countries of the North.

When some unions in the North protest the WTO, it's because they see themselves and their rights under attack. But on the whole, I think, more and more—and this was demonstrated in Seattle—we have trade unions and workers working with students and community activists and talking about a more equitable

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relationship, not only in the developed countries but in the developing countries as well.

When the countries of the North say through the WTO, "We want to take down the trade barriers so that we can enter with our investment, with free movement in and out," they are the beneficiaries. They may claim that the countries of the South are going to benefit—and there may even be superficial benefits, and certainly if there is an elite in a country willing to cooperate there will be a piece of the action for them. But for the mass of the people the situation does not improve. And the medicine that is being offered is going to make the patient worse, not better.

I want to give you an example. All over Africa, and I'm thinking particularly of places like Zimbabwe and Zambia, there was a pretty good indigenous publishing industry in terms of publishing for schools and colleges—textbooks and readers and so on. And often these were paid for by government purchases or government subsidies. But you had a reasonably good educational-publishing situation. Then, the British and American publishing firms move in with a glossy product—more attractive, more expensive to produce, but they can sell it cheaply in competition with the local product—and they succeed in wiping out the local product. So, number one, of course, the product disappears, the local industry disappears; and two, when they now have a monopoly on the market, they can also dictate the price of the product, and they can, in fact, make it so expensive that it becomes inaccessible for most of the people in that community.

As we said in Seattle, no new round, we want the turnaround.

★

Njoki Njoroge Njehu

Njoki Njoroge Njehu is director of the US 50 Years Is Enough campaign (www.50years.org), a coalition of 208 organizations dedicated to the transformation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and one of the main organizers of the April protests. Originally from Kenya, she is now based in Washington, DC.

The Economist assumes that the developing countries were not well represented in Seattle. That is not true. I personally was in Seattle and had frequent contact with people from the developing world.

The concerns about the role of the WTO are particularly profound for developing countries. Of course people in poor countries want a living wage. And they don't want to get sick from pollution. They deserve and desire the same kinds of protections that more "enlightened" workers in the North desire. The problem has been that developing countries have been convinced that the only way they can compete is by accepting low wages, poor environmental protection, few labor rights and no chances for independent organizing. We've been convinced that this is what we deserve within the current global economy.

The trade ministers do not speak for the people. They speak for themselves, for an elite. They have benefited from joint ventures with Northern multinational corporations, from the privatization of state-owned enterprises. The majority of ordinary people do not benefit. In our countries, the health systems and the school systems have been devastated. But a few years ago, when President Moi of Kenya got sick, he didn't have to go to the local hospital—he flew to South Africa for treatment. When the government ministers' kids need an education, they send them to the North. They have a way out. The majority of the people in our countries don't.

Northern unions, environmentalists and NGOs have to learn the real meaning of solidarity. They really need to understand that. The HOPE for Africa Act, which Representative Jesse Jackson Jr. introduced last year, had a very interesting provision. It would give US citizens standing in federal court to sue US corporations that were violating US standards on environment and labor rights in other countries. So, for instance, it would make it possible for people in this country who have been working on the Ogoni case in Nigeria to sue Shell Oil for the violation of environmental, labor and human rights in the Niger Delta.

The real story is that the interests of the workers are common. People must understand that their interests are not with capital, with multinational corporations. If people understood, that would make a big difference. Now it seems that people everywhere are fighting for their jobs.

There's a film called *From the Mountains to the Maquiladoras*, which shows women from Tennessee going to Mexico to see where their jobs went when their plant was closed. They were angry that people in Mexico had taken their jobs. So they boarded a bus and rode down to Mexico. There's a poignant moment where one of the women is standing in front of the Mexican factory, with its very green lawn and with sprinklers going—and in the other corner of that shot, you see the shacks where the workers live, shacks next to open sewers. These shacks were made from the cardboard boxes that had been used to ship the factory equipment from Tennessee to Mexico. And the woman starts crying. She realizes that she did not lose her job to these Mexican workers; she lost her job because her employers were greedy. She realizes that her interests are not personal, that they shouldn't be about just her job—but that she should be in solidarity with these Mexican workers. That kind of people-to-people connection is what we need more of. We saw some of that in Seattle. But I think we all have a very long way to go in understanding one another, in trusting one another.

Of course, there's a long history of the labor movement in this country being on the wrong side—siding with the US government in many, many places, helping it with its covert and dirty work. So there needs to be a lot of healing, a lot of learning. We need to have the workers of the world unite. Not a new idea, but I think an idea that speaks to the heart of what we need to see happening.

★

G. Rajasekaran

G. Rajasekaran is secretary general of the Malaysian Trades Union Congress.

I don't think the WTO should be abolished. But reformed, yes. Our approach is, yes, we support free trade. We support certain objectives of the WTO. But make sure it benefits the vast majority, meaning the working people.

Core labor standards are not about wages but about prohibiting child labor or forced labor, like using prisoners to carry out pro-

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duction work. We are not a rich country, but we feel that having core labor standards will benefit the poor countries.

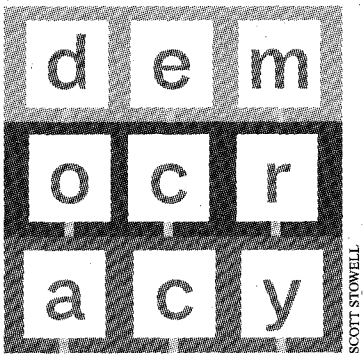
I see ourselves as allies with all workers of the world. If there is competition, it should not be unfair competition like putting children to work at one-third of an adult's wages. This is unfair competition, which is not right, and it also is not benefiting consumers. You know, some US companies contract out and produce branded products in Third World countries. But the people who have gotten the jobs do not benefit; they're just working for meals. And the companies bring the products back and sell them at the same price in their own country.

In the past two years we have been invited to participate in some of the consultation processes at the World Bank as well as the IMF. We believe that when they lay down conditions, they seem to be talking only about corporations and businesses and tax systems and so forth. But they should also look at ways in which they can achieve the goal they say they are interested in: how to eradicate poverty all over the world. ■

THERE'S A MOVEMENT OUT THERE, AND IT'S GATHERING STEAM. TIME TO GET ON BOARD.

Talking 'Anarchy' With Chomsky

Noam Chomsky is a longtime political activist, writer and professor of linguistics at MIT. His latest books are The Common Good *and* The New Military Humanism. *He was interviewed for* The Nation *in late February by David Barsamian, director of* Alternative Radio *in Boulder, Colorado (www.alternativeradio.org). An edited version of that interview follows.*



SCOTT STOWELL

DB: ***Let's talk about what occurred in Seattle in late November/early December around the WTO ministerial meeting. What meaning do you derive from what happened there, and what are the lessons to be drawn?***

Chomsky: I think it was a very significant event. It reflected a very broad opposition to the corporate-led globalization that's been imposed under primarily US leadership, but by the other major industrial countries, too. The participation was extremely broad and varied, including constituencies from the United States and internationally that have rarely interconnected in the past. That's the same kind of coalition of forces that blocked the Multilateral Agreement on Investment a year earlier and that strongly opposed other so-called agreements like NAFTA and the WTO.

One lesson from Seattle is that education and organizing over a long term, carefully done, can really pay off. Another is that a substantial part of the domestic and global population, I would guess probably a majority of those thinking about the issues, ranges from being disturbed by contemporary developments to being strongly opposed to them, primarily to the sharp attack on democratic rights, on the freedom to make your own decisions and on the general subordination of all concerns to the specific interests, to the primacy of maximizing profit and domination by a very small sector of the world's population.

Thomas Friedman, writing in the* New York Times, *called the demonstrators at Seattle "a Noah's ark of flat-earth advocates."

From his point of view that's probably correct. From the point of view of slave owners, people opposed to slavery probably looked that way. For the 1 percent of the population that he's thinking about and representing, the people who are opposing this are flat-earthers. Why should anyone oppose the developments that we've been describing?

Would it be fair to say that in the actions in the streets in Seattle, mixed in with the tear gas was also a whiff of democracy?

I would take it to be. A functioning democracy is not supposed to happen in the streets. It's supposed to happen in decision-making. This is a reflection of the undermining of democracy and the popular reaction to it, not for the first time. There's been a long struggle, over centuries, in fact, to try to extend the realm of democratic freedoms, and it's won plenty of victories. A lot of them have been won exactly this way, not by gifts but by confrontation and struggle. If the popular reaction in this case takes a really organized, constructive form, it can undermine and reverse the highly undemocratic thrust of the international economic arrangements that are being foisted on the world. And they are very undemocratic. Naturally one thinks about the attack on domestic sovereignty, but most of the world is much worse. Over half the population of the world literally does not have even theoretical control over their own national economic policies. They're in receivership. Their economic policies are run by bureaucrats in Washington as a result of the so-called debt crisis, which is an ideological construction, not an economic one. That's over half the population of the world lacking even minimal sovereignty.

Why do you say the debt crisis is an ideological construction?

There is a debt, but who owes it and who's responsible for it is an ideological question, not an economic question. For example, there's a capitalist principle that nobody wants to pay any attention to, of course, which says that if I borrow money from you, it's my responsibility to pay it back, and if you're the lender, it's your risk if I don't pay it back. But nobody even conceives of that possibility. Suppose we were to follow that. Take, say, Indonesia, for example. Right now its economy is crushed by the fact that the debt is something like 140 percent of GDP. You trace that debt back, it turns out that the borrowers were something like 100 to 200 people around the military dictatorship that we supported, and

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their cronies. The lenders were international banks. A lot of that debt has been by now socialized through the IMF, which means Northern taxpayers are responsible. What happened to the money? They enriched themselves. There was some capital export and some development. But the people who borrowed the money aren't held responsible for it. It's the people of Indonesia who have to pay it off. And that means living under crushing austerity programs, severe poverty and suffering. In fact, it's a hopeless task to pay off the debt that they didn't borrow. What about the lenders? The lenders are protected from risk. That's one of the main functions of the IMF, to provide free risk insurance to people who lend and invest in risky loans. That's why they get high yields, because there's a lot of risk. They don't have to take the risk, because it's socialized. It's transferred in various ways to Northern taxpayers through the IMF and other devices, like Brady bonds. The whole system is one in which the borrowers are released from the responsibility. That's transferred to the impoverished mass of the population in their own countries. And the lenders are protected from risk. These are ideological choices, not economic ones.

In fact, it even goes beyond that. There's a principle of international law that was devised by the United States over a hundred years ago when it "liberated" Cuba, which means it conquered Cuba to prevent it from liberating itself from Spain in 1898. At that time, when the United States took over, it canceled Cuba's debt to Spain on the quite reasonable grounds that the debt was invalid since it had been imposed on the people of Cuba without their consent, by force, under a power relationship. That principle was later recognized in international law, again under US initiative, as the principle of what's called "odious debt." Debt is not valid if it's essentially imposed by force. The Third World debt is odious debt. That's even been recognized by the US representative at the IMF, Karen Lissaker, an international economist, who pointed out a couple of years ago that if we were to apply the principles of odious debt, most of the Third World debt would simply disappear.

Newsweek ***had a cover story on December 13 called "The Battle of Seattle." It devoted some pages to the anti-WTO protests. There was a sidebar in one of the articles called "The New Anarchism." The five figures the sidebar mentioned as being somehow representative of this new anarchism included Rage Against the Machine and Chumbawamba. I don't suppose you know who they are.***

I know. I'm not that far out of it.

They're rock bands. The list continues with the writer John Zerzan and Theodore Kaczynski, the notorious Unabomber, and then MIT professor Noam Chomsky. How did you figure into that constellation? Did **Newsweek** ***contact you?***

Sure. We had a long interview [*chuckles*].

You're pulling my leg.

You'd have to ask them. I can sort of conjure up something that might have been going on in their editorial offices, but your guess is as good as mine. The term "anarchist" has always had a very weird meaning in elite circles. For example, there was a headline in the *Boston Globe* today on a small article saying something like "Anarchists Plan Protests at IMF Meeting in April." Who are the anarchists who are planning the protest? Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, labor organizations and others. There will be some people around who will call themselves anarchists, whatever that means. But from the elite point of view, you want to focus on something that you can denounce in some fashion as irrational. That's the analogue to Thomas Friedman calling them flat-earthers.

Vivian Stromberg of Madre, the New York–based NGO, says there are lots of motions in the country but no movement.

I don't agree. For example, what happened in Seattle was certainly movement. Students have been arrested in protests over failure of universities to adopt strong antisweatshop conditions that many student organizations are proposing. There are lots of other things going on that look like movement to me. In many ways what happened in Montreal a few weeks ago [at the Biosafety Protocol meeting] is even more dramatic than Seattle.

It wasn't much discussed here, because the main protesters were European. The United States was joined by a couple of other countries that would also expect to profit from biotechnology exports. But primarily it was the United States against most of the world over the issue that's called the "precautionary principle." That means, is there a right for a country, for people, to say, I don't want to be a subject in some experiment you're carrying out? The United States is insisting on exactly that, internationally. In the negotiations in Montreal, the United States, which is the center of the big biotech industries, genetic engineering and so on, was demanding that the issue be determined under WTO rules. According to those rules, the experimental subjects have to provide scientific evidence that it's going to harm them, or else the transcendent value of corporate rights prevails. Europe and most of the rest of the world insisted [successfully] on the precautionary principle. That's a very clear indication of what's at stake: an attack on the rights of people to make their own decisions over things even as simple as whether you're going to be an experimental subject, let alone controlling your own resources or setting conditions on foreign investment or transferring your economy into the hands of foreign investment firms and banks. It's a major assault against popular sovereignty in favor of concentration of power in the hands of a kind of state-corporate nexus, a few mega-corporations and the few states that primarily cater to their interests. The issue in Montreal in many ways was sharper and clearer than it was in Seattle.

Do you think the food-safety issue might be one around which the left can reach a broader constituency?

I don't see it as a particularly left issue. In fact, left issues are just popular issues. If the left means anything, it means it's concerned with the needs, welfare and rights of the general population. So the left ought to be the overwhelming majority of the population, and in some respects I think it is. In that sense it could be a left issue that is a popular issue.

Talk more about the student antisweatshop movement. Is it different from earlier movements that you're familiar with?

It's different and similar. In some ways it's like the antiapartheid movement, except that in this case it's striking at the core of the relations of exploitation. It's another example of how different constituencies are working together. Much of this was initiated by Charlie Kernaghan of the National Labor Committee in New York

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and other groups within the labor movement. It's now become a significant student issue in many areas. Many student groups are pressing this very hard, so much so that the US government had to, in order to counter it, initiate a kind of code. They brought together labor and student leaders to form some kind of government-sponsored coalition, which many student groups are opposing because they think it doesn't go anywhere near far enough.

Students are not calling for a dismantling of the system of exploitation. Maybe they should be. What they're asking for is the kinds of labor rights that are theoretically guaranteed. If you look at the conventions of the International Labor Organization, the ILO, which is responsible for these things, they bar most of the practices, probably all of them, that the students are opposing. The United States does not adhere to those conventions. Last I looked, the United States had ratified very few of the ILO conventions. I think it had the worst record in the world outside of maybe Lithuania or El Salvador. Not that other countries live up to the conventions, but they have their name on them at least. The United States doesn't accept them on principle.

Tell me what's happening on your campus, at MIT. Is there any organizing around the sweatshop movement?

There are very active undergraduate social-justice groups doing things all the time, more so than in quite a few years. What accounts for it is the objective reality. It's the same feelings and understanding and perception that led people to the streets in Seattle. The United States is not suffering like the Third World. But although this is a period of reasonably good economic growth, most of the population is still left out. The international economic arrangements, the so-called free-trade agreements, are basically designed to maintain that.

Comment on an African proverb that perhaps intersects with what we're talking about: "The master's tools will never be used to dismantle the master's house."

If this is intended to mean, don't try to improve conditions for suffering people, I don't agree. It's true that centralized power, whether in a corporation or a government, is not going to willingly commit suicide. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't chip away at it, for many reasons. For one thing, it benefits suffering people. That's something that always should be done, no matter what broader considerations are. But even from the point of view of dismantling the master's house, if people can learn what power they have when they work together, and if they can see dramatically at just what point they're going to be stopped, by force, perhaps, that teaches very valuable lessons in how to go on. The alternative to that is to sit in academic seminars and talk about how awful the system is. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

women are not only on the losing side of the wage gap but the math gap (not to mention a third gender gap—the condescension gap).

JENNIFER BAUMGARDNER
AMY RICHARDS

NUCLEAR WORKERS PUT AT RISK, TOO

Takoma Park, Md.

■ In "Full-Court Press" [Feb. 28] Eric Alterman states that "only a small number of the victims" will be impacted by the recent acknowledgment by Energy Secretary Bill Richardson that nuclear weapons workers were killed from workplace exposures. Some 600,000 people have helped build the US nuclear arsenal. Government studies indicate that workers at fourteen facilities have experienced excess deaths from cancer and other diseases following exposure to radiation and other substances. Medical monitoring of current and former workers still alive also shows excessive numbers of diseases.

There are many similarities between the story of the human radiation victims and US nuclear weapons workers. Both groups were deliberately put at risk without their knowledge. When victims sought justice, the government used all its resources, including illegal acts, to deny compensation. The few scientists and government officials who stood up on behalf of victims paid dearly for their courage.

Coming to terms with this dark side of America's romance with the atom will be a decision made in the White House and Congress. That decision regarding nuclear weapons workers has yet to be made.

ROBERT ALVAREZ
Former adviser to the Secretary of Energy

LET THE BOOMERS FOOT THE BILL

Portland, Ore.

■ Thanks for "Two States of the Union." However, I disagree about reducing the national debt [Feb 21]. Our debt arises from Reaganite strategy, which radically raised military spending and cut tax revenues, then used the resulting deficit as a reason to curtail social spending.

The economic health of Social Security may depend on continued economic growth, as you say. But its political health depends on fending off right-wing generation-war ideology. People my age (early 40s) and younger are urged to doubt that we will see any Social Security and therefore to pursue individualist strategies and support privatization, and the rhetorical lack-of-confidence game is powerful. An answer to the generational-war argument is to have the wealthiest Baby Boomers pay more of their fair share now while they are in their peak income years. Removing the cap on income subject to Social Security taxation would be one good way to do that.

Paying down the national debt would be less direct, but would at least have Baby Boomers paying off costs they incurred by electing Reagan and accepting the eighties Republican shell game. While debt reduction is not as good as lifting the cap, when economic growth slows again, resources needed for Social Security will not be paying financiers for the late cold war. Likewise, reduction of debt service in the regular budget would free money for the Progressive Caucus agenda, which would be less vulnerable to renewal of the shell game when the economy slows.

CHRIS LOWE

WHO BENEFITED?

Portland, Ore.

■ It's a pity that the Germans who benefited so much from Hitler's 1933–1936 labor and economic policies didn't have more time to enjoy them. By 1945 more than 6 million of them—along with the 6 million others whose history Alexander Cockburn seems to have so conveniently forgotten—were dead ["Beat the Devil," Feb. 28]. Of course it did leave the autobahns much less crowded.

ELINOR LANGER

COCKBURN REPLIES

Petrolia, Calif.

■ Silly me, I assumed that *Nation* readers knew what happened in the Second World War, and that Hitler was a bad guy. I'm not sure what the point of Elinor Langer's letter is, beyond showing us that she at least hasn't forgotten her history. Is it that Keynesianism leads to genocide and the world would be a better place if Hitler had listened to Montague Norman?

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Her Own Lambs and Falcons

GEORGETTE FLEISCHER

SELECTED LETTERS OF REBECCA WEST.
Edited by Bonnie Kime Scott.
Yale. 497 pp. $35.

It really is about time we had the letters of Rebecca West. And this plump selection, sumptuously produced and plushly upholstered with Bonnie Scott's introduction and notes, is a first edition of which Dame Rebecca would, I think, have been proud. But one never knows.

Sixty years after her first pictorial incarnation in the *Selected Letters*, a theatrical photograph of the 16-year-old aspiring actress Cicily Fairfield (earlier Cicely Fairfield, her real name, replaced at 20 by that of the daring heroine of Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*, Rebecca West), one finds the Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire still striving to coin her own image. To Lovat Dickson, the biographer of her lover H.G. Wells (Dickson's biography was subtitled *His Turbulent Life and Times*), West declared flatly: "I have rewritten the passage [in your manuscript] about my youth. The trouble is that most of what you have written about me is—forgive me for my candour—the wildest nonsense." To Anthony West, her illegitimate child by Wells, born August 4, 1914, the day Britain declared war on Germany for the first time in the twentieth century, Rebecca pleads at length: "But I am terribly worried by your letter, because of your sentence—'I was left out of my father's will altogether on the ground that I was "amply provided [for] elsewhere," that being a reference to his understanding that I was to inherit something substantial from Henry [Andrews, West's financier husband from 1930 until his death in 1968].' This throws me."

And approaching the ripe but hardly flybitten age of 83, West wrote to her first biographer, Victoria Glendinning: "The biography I have in mind for myself wouldn't fit into such a frame [a study of her as a woman writer]. For one thing, there would be quite a lot of space devoted to such things for example as my relations with Emma Goldman [during her 'anti-Bolsh' period of *Disillusionment With Russia* (1925), for which West wrote the introduction], and with the *New Statesman*, and with the rise of Titoism during the war [West was its increasingly embittered opponent]."

In other words, Cicely Fairfield, Cicily Fairfield, "loving Panther" as she was known to Wells and "Auntie Panther" as she was for a time known to their son, Anthony (a detail that does not appear in Scott's notes), Rebecca West, Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire, was a woman of many guises and disguises, a publicity seeker and a publicity shunner, and all too frequently, a spin doctor when it came to herself and her family—and not unrelatedly, when it came to the capacious span of history she lived through in her ninety years (1892–1983), a history she represented, influenced and became an integral part of. It is hard to come up with a woman writer of the past century who was more important in this regard. And the ante has been upped in the wake of the recent war in Kosovo. West's reputation rests primarily on her 1,200 page magnum opus, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* (1941), a work many still consider to be the most important political and cultural history of Yugoslavia up to World War II. For this reason it is important that we study Rebecca West and learn about this history, and our relationship to it, from her.

The Selected Letters *form a biography of Rebecca West and her times, one that substantially reinvigorates our view of her.*

One would hardly exaggerate in describing the *Selected Letters of Rebecca West* as a biography of West and her times in letters. Though there are two competent biogra-

Georgette Fleischer is completing a doctorate at Columbia University. Her dissertation, "Genre Departures: Women Writers and the Crisis of Representing National Socialism and World War II," devotes a chapter to Rebecca West.

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phies of her to date, Glendinning's *Rebecca West: A Life* (1987) and Carl Rollyson's *Rebecca West: A Life* (1996), the album of self-portraits presented in the *Selected Letters* substantially reinvigorates our view of West. She is by turns admirable, for her generosity and her ability to forgive those she loves, and maddening, for her manipulations and the rigidity of her frequently illiberal politics: Her fanatic anti-Communism, for instance, hardly seems rational. And then sometimes she is heart-rending, as when she writes to Wells around March 1913, soon after the beginning of their affair, when he's cooled to her already (she was only 20 at the time, while he was a man of 46 married to his second wife, Jane):

> I don't understand why you wanted me three months ago and don't want me now....
>
> I always knew that you would hurt me to death some day, but I hoped to choose the time and place. You've always been unconsciously hostile to me and I have tried to conciliate you by hacking away at my love for you, cutting it down to the little thing that was the most you wanted....
>
> You want a world of people falling over each other like puppies, people to quarrel and play with, people who rage and ache instead of people who burn....
>
> You've literally ruined me. I'm burned down to my foundations.

Who could resist such a love letter? Wells, whose attention she'd attracted by calling him "the old maid among novelists" in her *Freewoman* review of his *Marriage*, could not. Their relationship had everything except marriage for the ten years it lasted, from 1913 to 1923 (her only marriage, to Henry Andrews, apparently had a few years of companionship before his physical decline, and not much else). There is no evidence I've seen to substantiate West's retrospective claims that she was terribly unhappy with Wells after the first few years and repeatedly tried to leave him. In fact, another letter to Wells, which does not appear in Scott's selection, also retrospectively misdated by West as "1920" but apparently written around the time of her mother's death, in August 1921, opens and concludes in the following manner:

> My own Dear jaguar,
>
> I have got your sweet letter this morning and it is such a comfort. Thank you for being such a good husband—I will try to be a good wife to you. I am aghast to think what I would feel like [going through her mother's decline and death] if I hadn't you....
>
> Dearest I must catch the post—and thank you my darling for the letter also the money.
>
> Yours—really for ever, and really yours,
>
> Old Panther

[Reproduced by Peters, Fraser & Dunlop on behalf of the estate of Rebecca West]

But the figure most mythologized by West—though in this case fiercely and relentlessly idealized by her—was her Anglo-Irish father, Charles Fairfield. Dame Rebecca simply could not accept the fact that he had abandoned her, along with her Scottish mother, Isabella (née Mackenzie), and her two elder sisters, Letitia and Winifred. In his youngest daughter's hands, this unreliable ne'er-do-well comes off as an adventurous and enterprising gentleman. Yet Charles Fairfield was a philanderer, and he did not provide for his family. He also becomes, for reasons that remain mysterious and are undoubtedly highly personal, the figure with whom she associated the Bosnian Serbs she encountered during her tours through Yugoslavia in 1936, 1937 and 1938. (Her original tour was sponsored by the British Council, for lectures on British culture at universities and English clubs.) As she recalled in a short memoir titled "My Father," published in the *Sunday Telegraph* shortly after her 70th birthday, on December 30, 1962:

> He was not at all like the inhabitants of these [British] isles, and the only place where I have ever seen large numbers of people cast in his mould was in the Bosnian part of Yugoslavia. The men who came down to the markets from the upland villages all looked at me out of my father's face.
>
> They had the same magnificent eyes under level brows, the same strong, dark hair and moustache, the high cheekbones, the straight nose, the tan skin. They were tall, and he was of middle height, but there was a like gauntness, and he carried himself with the same air which these Bosnians had acquired through centuries spent in guerrilla warfare against the Turkish conqueror. He looked exotic, romantic, and a zealot.

Stanislav Vinaver, the model for Constantine in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* and the Belgrade Press Bureau chief who guided West through Yugoslavia—and did indeed influence her view of its politics, contrary to her later denials—correctly perceived her personal stake in Yugoslavia, as indicated in his letter to her of May 4, 1938:

The Barbecue

On the plywood deck canopied by Connecticut trees
so tall and lush we felt dwarfed and insignificant,
the family gathered under green leaves.

There was barely a scratch of wind or breeze.
Someone lit the coals, poured the drinks
on the plywood deck canopied by Connecticut trees.

A boy hammered a swarm of bees.
One of us mourned her unborn child.
The family gathered under green leaves.

The humidity so bad it was like another child between
us we wanted to take inside and send to her room
on the plywood deck canopied by Connecticut trees.

The child who took a fall with bruised knees
would never find herself, the third we would lose to cancer.
The family gathered under green leaves
on the plywood deck canopied by Connecticut trees.

Jill Bialosky

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TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

From layers of flab to rock hard abs in just minutes a day!

Years of fitness research has led to the development of AB-DOer™, the first machine that provides an effective abdominal aerobic workout.

by Julie Harrison

For years, I've been fighting a losing battle against my expanding waistline. I used to spend hours and hours at the local health club, attending aerobics classes and doing crunches. I tried playing tennis...I tried jogging...I even tried diet pills, but nothing worked. I reached the point where I was in pretty good shape, as my legs and arms became stronger. The only problem was that I was still hauling around an extra 10 pounds, and there did not seem to be a thing I could do about it. Then one day I ran into my old tennis partner who'd had a similar build. She looked years younger and a great deal more fit than I'd ever remembered her. She told me she'd given up tennis and was concentrating on one thing: her midsection. She said she'd found the perfect machine for a targeted aerobic workout for her abdominal, oblique and back muscles...the AB-DOer™.

What a waist. Until now there has not been a fitness machine that made it possible to aerobically train the midsection. Treadmills and stairmasters work the legs, and ab crunchers and rollers strengthen your muscles. Most of these methods don't reduce the size of your waist, and some even cause your midsection to appear larger. Most people's perception of your fitness is based on the size of your waist. AB-DOer is simply the most balanced midsection reduction system available today. Best of all, you can work out whenever... and wherever you want, without paying exorbitant health club dues.

Body engineering. The creators of this remarkable machine recognized that, even with all of the fitness machines on the market, none targeted an aerobic workout on the midsection. AB-DOer targets more than just the upper abs, it works the obliques and the muscles of the lower back. Unlike crunchers and rollers, which provide only forward resistance, AB-DOer enables a wide range of motion. The adjustable Resistance Bar allows you to work the midsection's muscles from different contraction angles. This allows you to exercise the inner abdominal, oblique and back muscles, helping you to lose inches fast and achieve the definition you desire.

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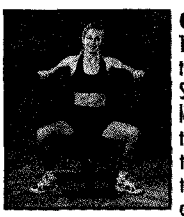
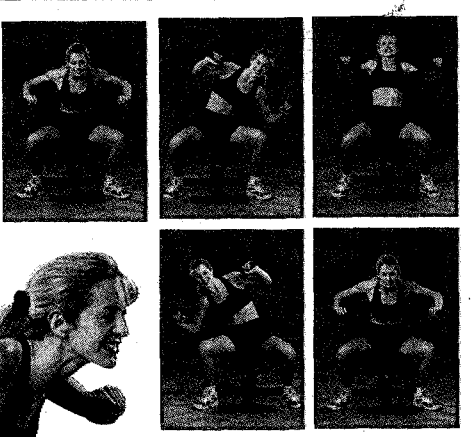
In addition to the Training Manual, there is even a Music Workout and Instructional Video.

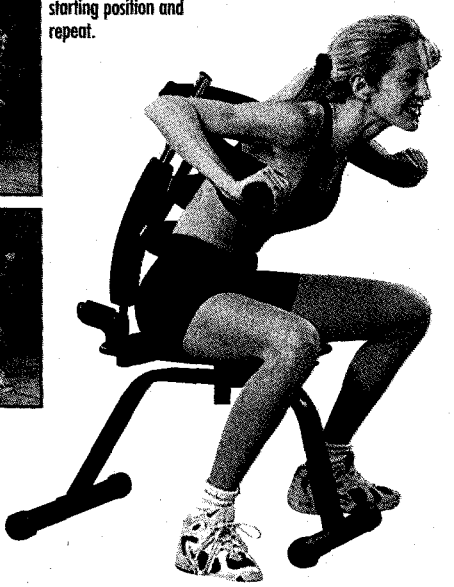
Try it risk-free. AB-DOer does the work of dozens of other fitness machines...for a fraction of the cost. Now you can try it for yourself. It comes with a 90-day manufacturer's limited warranty and Comtrad's exclusive risk-free home trial. If you are not satisfied for any reason, simply return it within 30 days for a full "No Questions Asked" refund.

The Complete Abdominal Workout

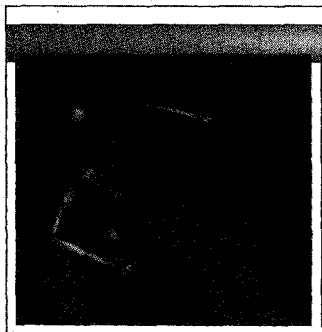


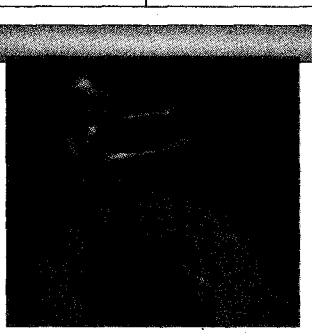
GOOD MORNINGS
This exercise places emphasis on the abdominals and lower back. Sitting in the upright position, lean forward bringing your chest to your knees and pause. Return to the starting position, pause, then lean backwards and pause again. Return to the starting position and repeat.





BODY BOOGIE
This drill is incredibly effective for working ALL of the mid-section; no muscle is ignored! Sitting in the upright position, lean forward bringing your chest to your knees. Once you reach this position, begin to rotate your torso to the right in a circular fashion until you perform a complete circle with your upper body. Start slowly with little circles, then as you warm-up, you can exaggerate larger circles with your mid-section. Continue doing these circles for either time or counting repetitions, then rotate in the opposite direction for the same number of repetitions or the same amount of time.





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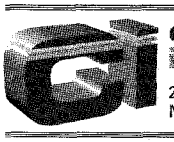

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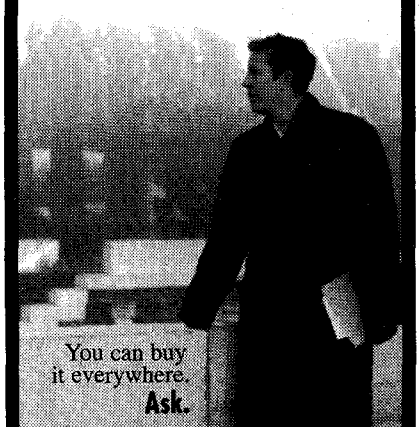

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> I have just found a rosette of the Commandeur of St. Sava and am enclosing it for you to wear. I sincerely hope that this ornament will be a good reminder of a country that is awaiting to be understood thoroughly. We all, and especially myself, expect much from your book which will undoubtedly reveal not only the truth about our country but also the truth about yourself. [Beinecke library]

It was the instability of the Balkans on the brink of World War II and the long and complicated political history that preceded that instability—a history of imperial aggression from without, including that of Russia, Turkey and Austria-Hungary, made manifest in the national instabilities within—that engaged West's protectionism and caused her to enter public life on a scale unprecedented in her life before. Saving Yugoslavia became her obsession. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* was a passionate plea to the British and American public to intervene in Yugoslavia in order to save it from National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy. Sizable portions of her work of travel/history were published serially in *The Atlantic* in January, February, March, April and May of 1941, before Pearl Harbor and the US declaration of war on Japan the following December. As she wrote to Henry Andrews on April 22, 1936, during her first journey through Yugoslavia: "I am much more interested in life here than I am in England; and I feel so ashamed of our national policy. If only we were solid with the French we could have filled this part of the world with light. How frightened they [the Yugoslavs] are, poor dears!"

The outcome of West's attempts at intervention was not what she had hoped for; from England she observed the volatile events of March and April 1941. On March 27, there was a popular uprising in Yugoslavia in defiance of the Axis Tripartite Agreement, an uprising that provoked the ouster of the compromising Regent Prince Paul and the ascension of young King Peter II (Peter Karageorgevitch). Winston Churchill hailed the demonstrations of resistance as the recovery of Yugoslavia's soul. Nevertheless, on April 6, 1941, Yugoslavia was invaded by Germany. Hitler ordered brutal reprisals—Luftwaffe bombing of Belgrade alone claimed 5,000 victims. Within a week, Yugoslavia had been subdued and subjugated, the lion's share placed under German domination with portions going to Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania; in Croatia a quisling government was established under Ante Pavelic. In June 1941 Peter Karageorgevitch and the rest of the Yugoslav royal family sought refuge in England.

This is one area in which Bonnie Scott's annotations could have been more substantial. There is no annotation at the head of West's "April 1941" letter to Alexander Woollcott, which opens:

> Dear Alec,
>
> I am grateful for the bouquets. The Yugoslavian book now seems to me a preternatural event in my life. Why should I be moved in 1936 to devote the following 5 years of my life, at great financial sacrifice and to the utter exhaustion of my mind and body, to take an inventory of a country down to its last vest-button, in a form insane from any ordinary artistic or commercial point of view—a country which ceases to exist? I find the hair rising on my scalp at the extraordinary usefulness of this apparently utterly futile act.

While there is an annotation to a passage much later in the letter that indicates, "The Germans invaded Greece through Bulgaria and Yugoslavia (April 1941)," there is nothing that explains the German invasion of Yugoslavia and its subsequent division, or the heady events and moments of hope that must have preceded it. Without this background, it would be difficult to understand fully the weariness and dejection expressed by West in the opening of her letter to Woollcott.

But the German invasion was not the final political game to be played. The Serb guerrilla fighters celebrated by West in the passage quoted above from "My Father" were also known as Chetniks. The Chetniks, who eventually singled out their Muslim compatriots for mass killings in their attempts to create a Greater Serbia, had an important underground existence in Yugoslavia during World War II. Their leader, Draza Mihailovic, was eventually appointed minister of war by the royal family, headed by King Peter II, in exile. During the period of German occupation a battle was waged from the Yugoslav hills between, on one side, the royalist Chetniks, led by Mihailovic, and, on the other, the Communist Partisans, led by Josip Broz Tito. Mihailovic is now little remembered. He was captured and executed as a traitor by Tito's forces on July 17, 1946. But West continued to uphold him and attempted to clear his name, both in the popular press and in an apparently unfinished work comprising several folders of material now sitting in the McFarlin Library at the University of Tulsa.

I believe these are the events that provided the turn of the screw for Rebecca

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West's anti-Communism, from which she would never be free. In turn, it explains her easy slide into the cold war mentality she did not have the intellectual courage to distinguish herself from, and it resulted in a slew of articles in the popular press on treason and traitors, and two books, *The Meaning of Treason* (1947) and *A Train of Powder* (1955), the former expanded, revised and republished as late as 1964 as *The New Meaning of Treason.*

Two of the most remarkable letters in Bonnie Scott's selection present West combatively attempting to defend herself on the cold war score. The first, written on June 7, 1953, is addressed to Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who had written to West in response to her *Sunday Times* articles on McCarthyism (which were reprinted in *US News & World Report*). West begins with the claim that she wrote the articles in order to counteract a virulent anti-American campaign in England caused by "propaganda based on the investigation-committees which are described as 'witch hunts.'" She continues in an astonishing paragraph straight out of the uncanny:

> Stories are spread which lead countless British people to believe that there is a complete suspension of civil rights in the United States; that all over America people are dragged in front of investigation committees, and if they are found guilty of having a communist or liberal affiliations are sent to prison and deprived of the right to earn their living, which last punishment is inflicted on the [innocent] also. For according to these stories the mere fact of appearing before an investigation committee is sufficient to put the most innocent person under a social ban, inflicted by a cowed community.

Two years later, in June 1955, West writes an even more defensive letter to the English author J.B. Priestley. She has never, she claims, defended McCarthy, not with "a single word." Furthermore, at the time her articles appeared, McCarthy (whom she later describes as "a half-baked gorilla from the Middle West," as if name-calling could set her on a higher moral footing) had only just become chairman of the Senate committee, and therefore she can't be blamed for failing to denounce him. What's more, she's spent a great deal of time attacking McCarthy—only not in the press, but in private letters. Finally, she writes:

> I am afraid that I am the last liberal left [!], and I must confess that my obstinate liberalism cannot approve of Communist civil servants packing the civil service

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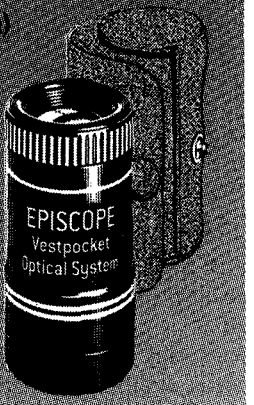

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with Communist Party members and getting them employment and promotion over the heads of non-Communists, nor in Communist trade unions that extend their power by thuggery, or in Communist school teachers who employ the sort of tactics (such as sending telegrams announcing falsely the death of a relative and making all night successions of telephone calls) which the teachers and students at Brooklyn College employed.

It is at this point that one wishes there had been something in the *Selected Letters* on the irony of West's appearance in Warren Beatty's 1981 film *Reds*—because one needs, at this point, some comic relief. Not surprisingly, Dame Rebecca praised Beatty to her last secretary, Diana Stainforth, for having the same quality she'd adored in H.G. Wells: In his presence, she had had his undivided attention, and never once had the sense that he was glancing over his shoulder looking for someone better. (Stainforth told me this in a telephone interview last summer.) This, when West was pushing 90.

Another treasure of this *Selected Letters*, and one that provides a provocative piece of the puzzle that became Dame Rebecca West, is the earliest group of letters, which most of us have never seen before. They begin with a precocious letter to the editor of the *Scotsman*, written when Cicily Isabel Fairfield was 14, and continue in a topical vein with two letters written at age 16 to her eldest sister, Letitia (addressed here as "Dear Cow"). In the letter to the editor, Cicily defends the National Women's Social and Political Union (NWSPU) and married women's right to work (her mother, Isabella, a pianist, was married but a lone working mother at this time). In the third letter, we find a portrait of the campaigner for women's rights in action:

> On Thursday I stood outside the poll at Forsyth Rd and shouted "Keep the Liberal out!" [meaning, as Scott explains in a note, maintain the right of the NWSPU to independent existence] I turned three votes on the doorstep, anyway. But the Liberal women are ghastly! They stood on the other side of the gate and shouted insults at us the whole time. I had five large Liberal ladies bearing down on me calling me a hooligan and a silly fool and other pretty names. One Liberal man tried to shake me and hurt me, much to their delight; but the police man settled all that.
>
> ...
>
> We had some very queer experiences.... I was selling p[ost].c[ard].s at one of our largest meetings when a wild eyes [*sic*] individual rushed up and thrust half a sovereign in florins into my hand and said "That is for your picture post card, madame!" I blushed and declined the compliment, and rushed away. Outside the poll one of the Liberal agents addressed me thusly—"Stop shouting my dear, and come and have some tea in town!" I didn't!

Cicily Fairfield's early political conviction, tied up in a letter signed "Your affectionate Baby," is the conflicted prototype, I would say, for the woman from a straitened childhood who ultimately became Commander of the Order of the British Empire, the pseudonymous but not inauthentic Dame Rebecca West. ■

Passages to India

AMITAVA KUMAR

HINDOO HOLIDAY. By J.R. Ackerley. New York Review Books. 302 pp. $12.95.
THE ROMANTICS. By Pankaj Mishra. Random House. 260 pp. $23.95.
INDIA: A MOSAIC. Edited by Robert B. Silvers and Barbara Epstein. New York Review Books. 285 pp. $24.95.

In the early 1920s, E.M. Forster was in India, engaged as the secretary to a royal personage, a minor Maharajah, whom he called "the Prince of Muddlers, even among Indian muddlers." In a manuscript dating to that period, Forster writes about guiltily confessing to his employer—His Highness, or H.H., as he is called in the text—that he had "tried to have carnal intercourse with one of the coolies."

The Indian nobleman was unfazed and felt quite assured when he learned that Forster had not "copulated" with the boy. He advised the writer to put all worry out of his mind. H.H. then added: "Only always come to me when you are in difficulties like this. I would have found you someone reliable among the hereditary servants and you could have had him quietly in your room—yes, yes, it's true I don't encourage those people, but it's entirely different in your case, and you must not masturbate—that's awful."

When Forster left India, he suggested the name of a friend, J.R. Ackerley, for his job. The Maharajah acquiesced, although he had desired "a secretary who was exactly like Olaf, a character in H. Rider Haggard's *The Wanderer's Necklace*, and had even written to Haggard for help." We are offered this last bit of engaging literary detail in Eliot Weinberger's sympathetic introduction to *Hindoo Holiday*, the book that Ackerley wrote from the journal he kept in India.

Hindoo Holiday was published in 1932 and has now been republished as a part of New York Review Books' Classics series. It is presented to us as it was written, a journal, its entries coinciding with the writer's five-month stay in Chhatarpur. (In the book, Ackerley changed Chhatarpur to Chhokrapur; the latter would translate loosely as "City of Boys.") Ackerley's diary entries are a delightful mixture of nearly novelistic observations about a small group of characters that surround the Englishman in the small Indian town. There is the hilariously eccentric Maharajah, the Maharajah's Dewan, Ackerley's Hindustani instructor, Abdul, several Britishers whom Ackerley pillories, and two youths, Narayan and Sharma. Even the book's obvious datedness—the double "o" in the title being an immediate giveaway—becomes a part of its charm.

Ackerley's writing is strewn with wildly comic observations. Unlike Forster's obsessive, even oppressive, adventures with sex in India, Ackerley's physical encounters share very little of that air of "conscious racial superiority which Anglo-Indians exhale." Forster, for instance, noted in his journal: "What relation beyond carnality could one establish with such people? He hadn't even the initiative to cut my throat." Ackerley is unable to occupy this position with any seriousness. For him, a kiss doesn't carry the white man's burden, although it might offer a quick, unanxious glimpse of cultural difference. Here is Ackerley's account of his conversation with the young vegetarian Narayan while they are out on a walk:

> And in the dark roadway, overshadowed

Amitava Kumar is the author of Passport Photos, *published this month by the University of California Press.*

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by trees, he put up his face and kissed me on the cheek. I returned his kiss; but he at once drew back, crying out:

"Not the mouth! You eat meat! You eat meat!"

"Yes, and I will eat you in a minute," I said, and kissed him on the lips again, and this time he did not draw away.

This isn't a portrait of the gentler face of imperialism. Instead, *Hindoo Holiday* is a witty travelogue, endearingly free of any pretense and condescension. It presents ordinary Indians as complex interlocutors in the colonial drama, and while they are often contradictory, they also remain wholly individual. Even Ackerley's anthropological gaze, which is never willfully distorting, is rich and charged with a delicate *frisson*. At one point, he explains the popular myth behind the four-tier Hindu caste system: "The Brahmans are the Lips of God; the Kshatriyas the Arms; the Vaishyas the Loins; and the Sudras the Feet. I believe that Rabindranath Tagore in one of his poems says: 'How can I worship my God better than by kissing His Feet?'"

Radical and original as this picture might be in the Indian context, in its shadow lurks another, seemingly more distant, meaning—it is an attempt, at once heroic and pathetic, to justify sex across classes. We see shades of Forster's *Maurice*. We see Oxbridge homosexuals, the history of the Oscar Wilde trial and the Sodomy Laws still fresh in their minds, finding a flawed fulfillment in the colonies. Even at its best, it could not have been an experience unembittered with all kinds of inequalities. It is to Ackerley's credit that this book neither gives in to that bitterness nor seeks to hide behind reassuring inequalities. Thus, without being explicitly political, Ackerley offers a politics, especially a politics that eschews escape through either an easy acceptance or the imposition of guilt.

One of my earliest lessons in guilt was imparted in childhood through the story of the death of Mahatma Gandhi's father. Gandhi was only 16 then, married to Kasturba, who was pregnant at that time. He notes in his autobiography that although he loved to nurse his father as he lay on his deathbed, his "mind was hovering about the bedroom."

Late one night, Gandhi was massaging his father's legs when his uncle came in to relieve him. Gandhi writes that he was tired and went to his room: "My wife, poor thing, was asleep. But how could she sleep when I was there? I woke her up." A few minutes later, there was a knock at the door. It was a servant. Gandhi's father had died.

"I saw that...animal passion had... blinded me," Gandhi wrote. The "shame of my carnal desire," he added, "is a blot I have never been able to efface or forget."

In Pankaj Mishra's debut novel, *The Romantics*, the young narrator, Samar, receives a telegram: YOUR FATHER SERIOUSLY ILL. COME SOON. His thoughts, however, are elsewhere. He has been looking forward to hearing from his friend Catherine, a French visitor to India, with whom he has had his first sexual, perhaps even emotional, experience.

Mishra's novel is based, for the most part, in Benares on the banks of the river Ganges. Samar is a bookish Brahman, a self-conscious provincial living alone and attempting to acquire an education. His friendship with two European women—apart from Catherine, there is Samar's neighbor who is literally called Miss West—sets into process a drama of discovery and change.

A few years ago, in Mishra's well-received travelogue, *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana*, we read of a woman in Benares named Sarah, soon bound for study in Chicago. She told Mishra: "I haven't met a single young white woman in Benares who has not been molested.... The difference between a man's and a woman's experience of Benares is the difference between day and night." In *The Romantics*, neither Miss West nor Catherine speaks of such threat or fear. There is no evocation either of what Salman Rushdie has called "white society's fear of the darkie." As the novel is set in the eighties, before the new vulgarity had taken root, the romance in its pages comes without that particular pain that Sarah spoke of so bitterly. Hence also, perhaps, the title.

The meeting of the East and the West as a narrative of romance is not new territory: E.M. Forster, and lesser lights like M.M. Kaye and Paul Scott, have also presented the colonial encounter as a romance, at times failed, at other times forced. More important, writers from the other side of the colonial divide have come to prominence in recent decades through their own, perhaps more contested, portrayals. Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* was an early classic of this genre; Assia Djebar's *Fantasia* is a complex, more contemporary, exploration of love and betrayal in the engagement of East and West.

Mishra's novel inscribes its difference less in relationship to those postcolonial

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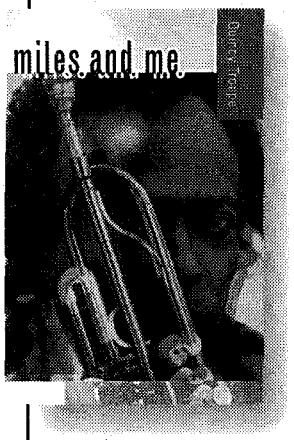

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writers than it does with respect to recent Indian fiction in English. If much of cosmopolitan Indian writing has valorized the immigrant and the foreign land, then *The Romantics* is a celebration of the home and its forgotten world. What is remarkable is that this is unlike the nostalgic home of much of expatriate Indian writing. Instead of the bustling, bursting metropolis, we have the carefully drawn pictures of a few linked lives in India's small towns.

Mishra's writing is appealing because even in a small-town milieu you find the details of a complex dialogue with the West. The deliberate pursuit of Western literature by a provincial student, carrying from his past the influences of his fast-eroding Brahmanic world, is only one of those details, but it is among the richest and most rewarding. To read Mishra on that theme, as with Naipaul, who is a clear influence here, means confronting the vivid energies of an imagination that is often shut off from the world but never closed to it.

This is the book's real romance. Samar's reading of Western literature opens a new world to him. Thus, it comes to be that Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*—"an account of an ambitious provincial's tryst with metropolitan glamor and disillusion"—offers satisfaction to our protagonist. More strikingly, the story also touches Samar's friend Rajesh, a well-read Brahman who has joined the ranks of the *lumpen*. We are with Samar and Rajesh inside a grimy second-class compartment of a train running on a narrow-gauge line between Benares and Allahabad, and Rajesh says about Flaubert's book: "It's the story of my life." Years later Samar learns that Rajesh is a contract killer. Rajesh writes him a letter—as direct, honest and disillusioned a testament as any—and he quotes Faiz: "This is not that long-looked-for break of day/Not that clear dawn in quest of which those comrades/set out."

When the new comes bursting in, the novel comes to an end. Samar was happy with Flaubert, but he won't accept satellite TV. Mishra, mature about the drama of the self, remains almost quiescent about the new capitalism. The Brechtian maxim—"Do not build on the good old days, but on the bad new ones"—is not heeded here. The literary humanism that binds this novel cannot go beyond expressing dismay at the new Benares, with its crowd of other tourists, some from the West and others from India's newly minted middle class, flocking to the new, concrete-and-glass hotels. Samar loses his passion for literature and retreats from the world. Rajesh is on the run. Catherine is gone and Miss West is leaving behind the India of free-market reforms.

Forget Flaubert. Make way for World Bank Lit.

In David Lynch's *Wild at Heart*, Lula (Laura Dern) is driving a car, changing stations on the radio, while Sailor (Nicolas Cage) sleeps in the back seat. The pair are on their way to California. The news on the radio opens a highway of blood and gore. First, we hear about open-heart surgeries, then multiple murders by a recent divorcée, then an item about a man in court who had sex with a corpse. Finally, a voice with a BBC accent takes us to Benares. The state authorities released 500 turtles into the waters of the Ganges in order to reduce human pollution, and now they plan to put in crocodiles to devour floating corpses.

Lula is disgusted. She locates another station, which is playing a song that makes the lovers kick their legs in the air and embrace each other with joy. Ah, the romantics....

India and Pakistan, by going nuclear in 1998, might have provided occasion for Lula to change the station once again. But Booker Prize–winner Arundhati Roy's response to the Indian nuclear test, an essay titled "The End of Imagination," forcefully delivers the unromatic image of a single world both responsible for and doomed by the nuclear madness. That essay, first published in the West in *The Nation* [September 28, 1998], serves as the introduction to a new collection, *India: A Mosaic*. The other pieces were all published earlier in the pages of *The New York Review of Books*.

Roy expresses her bafflement at the peculiar meeting of East and West in the applause over the bomb in the streets of India. The ultranationalist young men who were celebrating India's nuclear bomb and simultaneously emptying crates of Coke and Pepsi into public drains are asked by Roy: "Coke is Western culture, but the nuclear bomb is an old Indian tradition?"

In the concluding article of the volume, Pankaj Mishra observes that in the new, nuclear India, populism is going to extract a grave cost from the most vulnerable. He writes that "the poor may find that the small portions of bread that occasionally went with the circuses have become even smaller."

Clearly, the essays by Roy and Mishra on India's nuclearization, serving as the

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volume's bookends, emphasize the importance of that event and hence of India as a subject of attention. Other essays in the collection—Ian Buruma's report on Chandigarh and Lucknow, Christopher de Bellaigue's brief but hard-hitting and informative account of Bombay, Roderick MacFarquhar's look back at the partition riots of 1947 even as India celebrated its fiftieth anniversary of independence in 1997—all touch upon India's right-wing turn with the rise to prominence of the Bharatiya Janata Party. As it was the BJP government that was responsible for the nuclear tests, this attention to the growth of sectarian ideologies is in sync with the above-mentioned articles by Roy and Mishra.

On the last page of his essay on nuclear India, Mishra writes of the pundits and psephologists discussing the 1998 parliamentary elections. "For days and nights on end," he says, "they discussed events and personalities about whom the most accurate thing one could say was that they would soon be overtaken by events and personalities equally inconsequential." This comment raises a point about the volume as a whole: If the quick flow of events and elections has made some of the essays already appear a bit outdated, what role does India play in the global imagination so as to justify this volume?

It is said that the great Brazilian poet, Joâo Cabral de Melo Neto, had reached a dead end as a poet "until he happened to read one day that life expectancy in his native Recife was even lower than India." The result was his marvelous *The Dog Without Feathers*, a turn away from symbolism to poetry with social value.

A similar, related impulse might be at work in the publication of *India: A Mosaic.* One of the essays in the volume, written by Amartya Sen and focusing on Tagore, attests to the complex and progressive response that writers in India have made to the legacies of colonialism as well as to India's troubled modernity. As in the case of Tagore, this response has also often been against the dominant expectations of the West.

Arundhati Roy's recent arrest in protest of a dam project, and her frank and open denunciation of both the Indian government and the World Bank, emblematizes that sophisticated stance. A collection like *India: A Mosaic* can be considered a tribute to it.

In the larger world, of course, this picture changes a bit. The same year that Roy sold millions of copies of *The God of Small Things*, another Indian, called Sabeer Bhatia, the inventor of Hotmail, made $400 million from the sale of the e-mail service to Microsoft. Most of the yearly H1-B visas granted by the US government go to Indian software programmers. It is the software writers from India rather than the fiction writers who are wired to the circuits of global production. In this scenario, regardless of all intentions, the publication of a book like *Hindoo Holiday* or *India: A Mosaic*, or even *The Romantics*, is more likely to fill the needs of a holiday at the beach or a transcontinental flight. This, too, is a part of the unsentimental education that World Bank Literature has to offer us.

Lately, an Indian software mogul, Azim Premji, with a personal net worth of more than $9 billion, opined that the United States is hurting itself with "too much liberal-arts education." I guess we ought to consider ourselves well warned. ■

Bound for (More) Glory

CALEB HELLERMAN

"Life is the music, and the people are the song." —Woody Guthrie

When Bruce Springsteen, Willie Nelson, Bono, Emmylou Harris and other stars covered Woody Guthrie material in the early nineties, it seemed that the Dust Bowl balladeer and communist-leaning union organizer had become as mainstream as he ever would. But now, at the turn of the millennium, a younger and more varied Guthrie revival is not so much paying tribute to the old legend as taking a new look at his revolutionary art: Ongoing projects include a traveling Smithsonian museum exhibit, an album of Guthrie lyrics set to new music by the eclectic bass player Rob Wasserman, an album based on a 1996 tribute concert at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (produced by folk singer Ani DiFranco), a book of Guthrie's paintings and drawings, a dance-troupe revue, several children's books and an album of his songs for children. Most anticipated is the follow-up to *Mermaid Avenue*, the 1998 collaboration between the English folk singer Billy Bragg and the Chicago-based rock group Wilco, which sold 300,000 copies and was a smashing artistic success.

The rebirth of interest is no coincidence; it stems from years of hard work by Woody's daughter Nora Guthrie and his longtime friend Harold Leventhal. After CBS's Charles Kuralt did a profile on the Guthrie legacy in 1988, Leventhal asked Nora to give some shape to the heap of boxes of Guthrie leftovers that was gathering dust in his office.

"For years, I regarded the archive as sacred." Leventhal says. "If he [Woody] didn't write it—don't touch." Nora, on the other hand, convinced him that "there are other people, very competent and creative, who could continue his work." With that understanding and more than $100,000 raised from fans in the music industry, Guthrie, Leventhal and archivist Jorge Arevalo made it a mission "to allow the archive to live and breathe." Now, a thrilled Arevalo says, "People are creating new works. People are being inspired." And the Guthrie they see isn't necessarily the Guthrie they thought they knew. [More information can be found at www.woodyguthrie.org.]

"Media images are reductionist by nature," comments Ani DiFranco during a break on her recent tour through New Zealand, in dismissing the Woody "hobo legend" as simply a caricature of him. "The great thing is that Nora is uncovering his lesser-known work—his pissed-off side, his luscious sexy side, all the things that make him a person."

"I knew Woody Guthrie as that leftward-leaning hobo and union rallier, and I guess a lot of people expect that," explains Wilco frontman Jeff Tweedy, trying to explain the new, emerging Guthrie. "But this may be a broader idea of what he was and is, and if nothing else, make him a little more human."

"Remember the Mountain Bed," a steamy love song on the forthcoming record, is a Tweedy favorite, combining the personal, the sensual and the religious.

> There on our mountain bed of leaves
> We learned life's reasons why
> People laugh and love and dream
> They fight, they hate to die

Caleb Hellerman, a television newswriter and producer, grew up with a portrait of Woody Guthrie in his living room.

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The lyrics Guthrie wrote later in life "are more universal, more open-ended," Tweedy says. "The things I find most intriguing about him are the spirituality and the commitment to a sort of humanistic individualism." If *Mermaid Avenue* was the first major success to spring from the Guthrie archive, the second is the spectacular Smithsonian exhibit, "This Land Is Your Land," now at the Museum of the City of New York (through April 23, after which it will be at the National Museum of American History in Washington, May 13–September 4, with future stops likely in Minneapolis, Tacoma, Oakland and Oklahoma City).

"This Land Is Your Land" doesn't skimp on Guthrie's voice or his other revolutionary qualities, and it doesn't leave out the trademark Guthrie humor, either. "I ain't a communist, necessarily," he once said, "but I've been in the red all my life."

"The new exhibit does two things," Nora Guthrie says as she rifles through books and videotapes, in between phone calls and meetings with copier salesmen in her recently expanded but still-cramped New York office. "It shows off his artwork for the first time, and it tells people what happened once he got to New York. *Bound for Glory* [Guthrie's autobiography] just ends with him on the trail: 'I'm going to New York...'"

In truth, the exhibit covers nearly every stage of Guthrie's life, from the collapse of his boyhood family in Oklahoma, to his days hopping freight trains around the country, to his Los Angeles radio days, to his frenzied union organizing and political work. There are touching sections on his family life in Coney Island, his days in the merchant marine with Cisco Houston and Jimmy Longhi and his long physical decline suffering the effects of Huntington's chorea. Most striking, along with the rare photos, original manuscripts and personal effects like a copy of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*, is the stunning collection of Guthrie's drawings. In style, many would fit comfortably next to the work of James Thurber or Rube Goldberg, though less sure than the output of those pros. Other of the drawings are strikingly modern. Nora tells of walking into a Kinko's to have some drawings copied, and having two separate college students ask if they were done by Keith Haring.

It's the content, not the style, that makes Guthrie's work unique. The most ambitious work in the show is a nineteen-panel set, drawn as a radical union organizing poster, in which we meet the "dollar," the "hand" and the "boss." In the next panels, the hand works for a meager loaf of bread, gets bawled out by his wife and, when he complains, "Hand is charged with trying to overthrow the U.S. government." "Join the CIO," the strip concludes. Guthrie's work evokes agitprop comic-book artists like Ho Che Anderson and Joe Sacco. An especially strong set of sketches (Woody didn't call the drawings "sets," but he tended to draw similar subjects one after another in his notebooks) shows faceless cops chasing faceless guitar players, over biting captions like "Garden of Eden" and "We will charge the speechmaker with violence."

Because Guthrie was so many things—artist, novelist, memoirist, songwriter and performer—it would have been easy to soft-pedal his radical beliefs. Political tension helped scuttle plans for a major Guthrie show at the University of Tulsa in the early eighties, for example. Yet in the current exhibit, Guthrie's sharp edges remain. "I wanted to make sure that the political stuff was in here; the unions, the organizing, the Communist Party," Leventhal says, adding that there was "total cooperation" from the Smithsonian. In truth, the project wasn't completely tension-free: When a fifth of the exhibit had to be cut for financial reasons, some people grumbled that the Smithsonian was less than sorry to see some sensitive sections—like a beautiful set of drawings inspired by the Sacco and Vanzetti trial—dropped.

With a brush and pen, Guthrie played with styles ranging from imitations of cartoons to Picassos. As a whole, they show his interests were broader than received legend has it. "Union's my religion," Guthrie sang, inspired by a merchant-marine chaplain's speech about the "oneness" of all things. To Guthrie, that oneness included everything from labor unions to Christianity, to Buddhism, to Einstein's theory of relativity. (Guthrie possessed an intense interest in physics, one of the few aspects missing from this exhibition of his works.)

Woody's transcendental philosophy is on display in a huge museum panel reproducing several lines that he wrote about sitting across from an immigrant in a downtown delicatessen:

> As I heard him speak, and he spoke a long time,
> But not one word was in my personal language,
> And I could tell by the deep sound, by the full tone
> Of his voice that he spoke my language
> I suppose you may wonder just how he could speak
> In a dialect that I could not savvy nor understand

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And yet understand every sound that
he made

Another time, he wrote: "I thought as I saw a drunken, streetwalking man mutter and spit and curse into the wind out of the café's plate glass, that maybe, if I looked close enough, I might hear some more of my voice."

That someone else's voice might be his own, Guthrie felt, was more testimony to the grand union. Beyond that, it created an imperative to fight—"for more justice, less oppression, less racism, less hatred period," as Springsteen said. Or, as Woody himself put it in "Tom Joad," his most militant ballad:

Everybody might be just one big soul
Well it looks thata way to me
Everywhere that you look in the day or
night
That's where I'm gonna be...

Today, Guthrie's legacy is alive and as daring as ever, thanks to the infusion of energy from the new generation. Wait till you hear "Union Love Juice," by the rapper Michael Franti of Spearhead, formerly known as the Disposable Heroes of Hip-Hoprisy, on the upcoming Wasserman record. "Some people want to put Woody in a crusty old box," DiFranco sums up. "They want to treat him as more of an icon and less of an artist. But Nora does his work justice by keeping it living and growing."

As Guthrie once signed off on a letter, "Not the End. Just Resting. Give Me Time. I'll Hit 'em Again. Your Time Now." ■

THEATER

Decline of the West

DAVID YAFFE

TRUE WEST. By Sam Shepard. Circle in the Square.

"I just wanted to give a taste of what it feels like to be two-sided," said Sam Shepard, explaining his motivation for writing *True West*. "It's a real thing, double nature. I think we're split in a much more devastating way than psychology can reveal. It's not some little thing we can get over. It's something we've got to live with." Shepard has been living with his dual nature for quite some time. A reclusive, cryptic writer and Oscar-nominated movie star, he has mastered the art of dodging the limelight while soaking up just enough of it for fame and fortune. *True West* (1980) presents dual nature in the characters of Lee, a burglar living off the land in the Mojave Desert, and his brother, Austin, an Ivy League–educated screenwriter. Lee cons a Hollywood producer into making his seemingly ridiculous idea for a "true life western." Austin, retaliating, steals his brother's trade by shoplifting twenty-six toasters. The producer "thinks [they're] the same person," so they attempt to collaborate on Lee's story but end up in a beer-drenched re-enactment of Cain and Abel. Battling over authorial identity and aesthetic authenticity, the two brothers attempt to reclaim the American western in a Southern California suburban kitchen.

It would be all too easy to read the play as autobiography, with the two brothers symbolizing the playwright's bifurcated self. The facts are somewhat different: Shepard, a native of Illinois, dropped out of Mount San Antonio Junior College to embark on a frontier known as East Village experimental theater. With the cheap rents and newly broadened sensibilities of the 1960s on his side, venues like La MaMa and Theatre Genesis allowed Shepard to learn on the job. *The Rock Garden* (1964), which consists of Beckettian non sequiturs that inexplicably lead to a boy's gratuitous monologue explaining his preference for "short" vaginas, is representative of the journeyman Shepard of the period. After about a decade of such excursions (later characterized by the playwright as "impulsive chronicles representing a chaotic, subjective world"), Shepard realized that there was actually nothing more absurd than pondering the hermeneutics of the American family. With a newfound Ibsenian naturalism, Shepard told tales of incest, drunkenness and secrets that were as plausible as they were outrageous. Almost a decade before Oprah went on the air, *Buried Child* (1978) literally excavated family skeletons with chilling pathos and unsettling humor.

True West, the third play of Shepard's so-called family trilogy (following *Curse of the Starving Class*), is also about family secrets and the impossibility of fleeing one's origins. Lee essentially states Shepard's point about naturalist unnatural acts when he informs Austin about the plausibility of fratricide: "You go down to the L.A. Police Department there and ask them what kinda' people kill each other the most. What do you think they'd say?" The answer is, of course, "family people," and, as the play unfolds, we are shown American domesticity giving way to barbarism. As if calling Shepard at his bluff, director Matthew Warchus, in the current Broadway revival at Circle in the Square, puts Shepard's "two-sided" proclamation to work by casting actors Philip Seymour Hoffman and John C. Reilly in both roles, with the two actors alternating the parts every three performances.

Hoffman has none of the qualities—good looks, a dynamic voice or physical prowess—that tend to make stars but is on his way to be becoming one anyway. As a pathetic obscene phone caller in Todd Solondz's *Happiness*, a lovesick techie in P.T. Anderson's *Boogie Nights* or an obsessively loyal caretaker in Anderson's *Magnolia*, the doughy, pasty-faced Hoffman humanizes his roles and somehow makes his un-charisma oddly compelling. The night I went he was typecast as Austin, and he made poetry out of his awkward whining, evoking embarrassed, slightly frightened laughter. Ridiculing his brother's idea of "the real West," which has seduced his producer (and placed his own love-story pitch in jeopardy), Hoffman gleefully mocks the producer's preference for a script about "grown men acting like little boys," turning the phrase into a maniacal singsong. Reilly, who played a well-meaning but hapless cop in *Magnolia*, had the more daunting task of following up John Malkovich's breakthrough performance in the 1982 Cherry Lane production, in which Malkovich burned up the stage simply by, well, being John Malkovich. With his gut arrogantly protruding over his belt, Reilly comes on with Gregory Peck affectations and over-the-top outbursts that rankle at first. What made Malkovich's performance great was its unexpectedness—a mixture of effeminate swishes, atavistic flashes of homicidal machismo and signs of ADD. Reilly's Lee is more of a stock beer-swilling shit-kicker.

Reilly's Lee seems at first like a sham,

David Yaffe, who teaches at Hunter College, is writing a book on jazz and American literature.

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but then we find that, however entranced Shepard has been by the American West, he thinks it's a sham, too. In "Brownsville Girl," a song Shepard co-wrote with Bob Dylan, Dylan attempts to remember a scene from John Ford's *The Gunslinger*, fetishizing "something about Gregory Peck and the way people moved," and elegizing that it "was a long time ago, long before the stars were torn down." When the scenery is actually torn down in *True West*, the American home, brotherhood and the idea of masculinity are eviscerated: "I keep finding myself getting off the freeway at familiar landmarks that turn out to be unfamiliar," says Austin, who wonders if his memories are mere artifice.

It's a difficult balancing act to stage a play that is about unreal perceptions that still feel real to the characters. The play's metafictional aspect—it is, after all, about writing a contrived western—only magnifies these "illusions of characters" (a critical term of Austin's) until you are not sure whether you don't buy it or whether that isn't the whole point. Surely one of the evening's greatest disappointments came with a Euripides-worthy recognition scene in which Mom, walking in on a kitchen littered with stolen toasters, dead plants and scattered debris, informs the fratricidal brothers that "Picasso's in town." As written, the line sends up artistic commodification, sibling rivalry and cultural literacy in one fell swoop. Played with maternal blandness by Celia Weston, the joke nearly nose-dives, saved only by its textual ingenuity. The handful of other flat spots (most notably Reilly's reliance on drawling cliché) are likewise saved by the play's near-indestructibility. The standing ovation was justified: Two men knocked themselves (and nearly each other) out, and Hoffman went to impressive lengths to flesh out a character usually relegated to the sidelines—which is, after all, his claim to near-fame. Sitting in the audience, dodging flying toast and sputtered beer, we were reminded that Shepard's true persona was neither the collegiate Austin nor the swaggering Lee but that of the spectator, wondering why that John Ford film had come unspooled. It's hard to skewer one's own childhood myth-making, but Shepard rises to the occasion. Seldom has fraudulence been expressed with such truth. ■

FILMS

He Took a Village

STUART KLAWANS

JOE GOULD'S SECRET • THE ROAD TO EL DORADO

In the role of *New Yorker* writer Joseph Mitchell—source and subject alike of *Joe Gould's Secret*—Stanley Tucci adopts the hesitant drawl of a displaced Southern aristocrat, who goes through the New York City of the early forties wearing his politeness like a second raincoat and hat. He needs the protection. To his editor, Harold Ross, he speaks in apologetic stammers, even when receiving a compliment. ("Thank God you don't write the way you talk," Ross grumbles.) Before a daughter who is no more than 9, he visibly recoils when told that Daddy's new story sounds boring. That's how vulnerable Tucci's Mitchell can seem, even among friends and family—let alone while plunging into the Village's lowest bars, sifting through rubble-strewn pits or eyeing strangers in the subway. Sleek and long-faced, Tucci carries himself down to all these places with a slightly stiff modesty and emerges with equal decorum, having undergone little visible alteration.

As producer and director of *Joe Gould's Secret*, Tucci behaves with similar reticence. His movie is as withdrawn, as quizzical—I'm tempted to say as inert—as its point-of-view character. All the film's energy has gone into the character who is Mitchell's chief object of study, the well-educated and grandiloquent Village bum Joe Gould: cadger of meals, drinks and dollars, stray pet of artists and poets, author of a purported million-word *Oral History of Our Time*. Here, at the opposite pole from Mitchell, is a man so exhibitionistic that Alice Neel gives him three penises when she paints his nude portrait, feeling "He didn't seem to have enough." A living tourist attraction, Gould makes a pittance by displaying himself to Village sightseers, who would be disappointed if they didn't get to meet a Bohemian. He's just as willing to gratify a more sophisticated audience, *The New Yorker*'s readers, to whose amused curiosity Mitchell delivers him in a wrapping of glossy paper.

The movie's energy goes into Gould, and in him it goes bad. As played by Ian Holm, he's the squat, dirt-darkened shadow of Joe Mitchell: hat comically battered, coat and all other surfaces ragged, beard overgrown in the time-honored style of the Cynic (though no previous Diogenes has been in the habit of dumping an entire bottle of ketchup into his soup). To Mitchell's embarrassment, this shadow won't disappear, once the *New Yorker* profile is published. Gould continues to cling to him, growing more rather than less desperate in his needs. It's as if he's become a weight that Mitchell has to drag along; and the movie drags with him, until we finally see what Mitchell can be when he lets the good manners slip.

For an actor of Ian Holm's boundless skill, the character of Joe Gould might be almost too easy. Lesser performers have been known to shuffle along and mumble at one moment, throw back the head in a Shakespearean roar the next and at the end voice a few lines of pathetic self-knowledge, with eyes misty but sharp and fingers atremble. That said, if you've watched other impersonations of the cracked Diogenes, you will be grateful to Holm. He does not charm; he refuses to twinkle. His Gould is perhaps least vital at precisely those moments when he's being the life of the party—forcing the randy-old-goat routine, misplaying the classic wild-dance-on-a-table. Unlike, say, Alec Guinness's Gully Jimson in *The Horse's Mouth*, Holm's Gould has to strain to be a rascal—to do anything, it seems—as if the strange inertia hanging over the movie had its center in his heart.

As Mitchell remarks in voiceover, "It was not the only thing we had in common."

Tucci's direction, from a script by Howard Rodman, relies more than a little on this sense of slowed or stopped time. The first shots come from archival footage of New York City, given a postcard tint and periodically arrested, so that actors in the passing scene don't pass. From there, the film opens into Maryse Alberti's softly focused, delicately colored cinematography. The overall impression is of a nostalgic glow, at odds with a time period and theme that might have called for black-and-white. Here, too, pauses are embedded. The people who cross Mitchell's path have a way of posing, as if allowing him to take their portraits; and his wife, Therese (Hope Davis), is a photographer, whose black-

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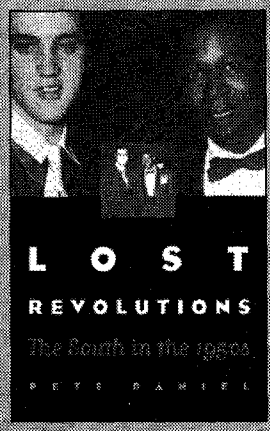

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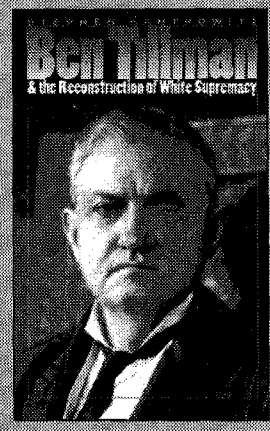

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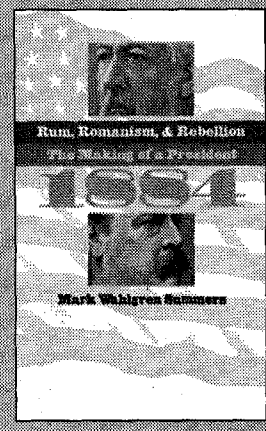

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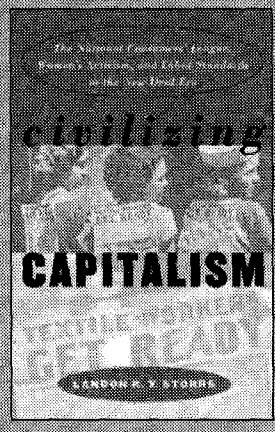

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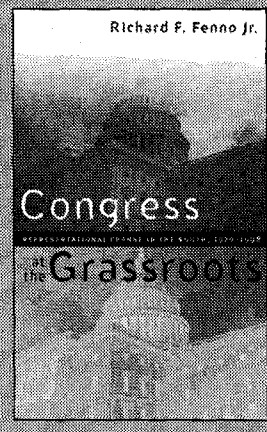

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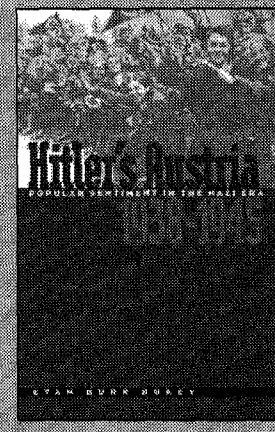

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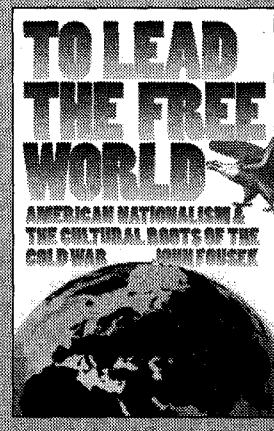

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and-white street scenes, analogues to her husband's stories, are incorporated into the narrative.

Why, then, does *Joe Gould's Secret* give off such a mellow aura? I think the reason has to do with the conviviality that was so prominent in Tucci's previous films, *Big Night* and *The Impostors*. The film is most impressive not for Holm's showy performance or Tucci's inward one—as fine as they are—but for the evocation of a Village community that looked after Gould, willingly if not perfectly. In that sense, the soul of the film belongs with Alice Neel (Susan Sarandon, looking beautifully at ease), art dealer Vivian Marquie (the radiantly intelligent Patricia Clarkson) and such incidental characters as Village Vanguard proprietors Max and Sadie Gordon (David Wohl and Julie Halston).

The troubled dialectic between writer and subject—exploiter and exhibitionist—seems less important, by the film's end, than the mere fact of help offered. *Joe Gould's Secret* glows with nostalgia for a city that sustained its weirdos. Sixty years from now, who will be able to make such a film about *our* cities?

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Somewhere there lives a boy who wants to grow up and join the bus-and-truck tour of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. For that child, DreamWorks has made the animated feature *The Road to El Dorado*.

Here's Miguel (voice of Kenneth Branagh), shoulder-length blond hair parted in the middle, reddish beard trimmed neatly at all times, sashaying into the South American jungle in a flowing outfit cut from the same fabric as the soundtrack's Elton John songs. Is this 1519, as a title proclaims, or 1973? If market research says that kiddie-film ticket-buyers are mostly parents who are pushing 40, then you know the answer. It's time to pump up the pop-rock and tell the animators to draw flared pants—the kind that are favored by Tulio (voice of Kevin Kline), Miguel's bosom companion, who pulls his dark hair back in a ponytail and wears a little vest, as if he worked in a Buffalo Springfield cover band.

The story, copied in equal measure from Hope-Crosby *Road* movies and *The Man Who Would Be King*, goes like this: Miguel and Tulio, a couple of scuffling showbiz types (I mean, lovable Spanish rapscallions) come into possession of a cryptic map to the City of Gold, El Dorado. Soon after, they stumble into the hold of a ship full of conquistadors bound for the New World. A brisk shipwreck later, Miguel and Tulio wash up in a place of dense jungle and visual mélange, composed of Olmec, Maya, Aztec and Disney elements. Sure enough, our boys have found El Dorado. Now they can be greeted as gods (in the time-honored fashion of white-men-meet-the-natives movies), introduce democracy to Mesoamerica and bicker over the affections of Chel (voice of Rosie Perez), the cartoon babe in the Dorothy Lamour role.

Directed by Eric "Bibo" Bergeron and Don Paul, *The Road to El Dorado* creates characters with the unmodeled, flat-plane features that uglify so much of digital animation. As if to force expression into these figures, the filmmakers have overcompensated by outfitting Miguel and Tulio with broad white bands in their mouths—digital-animation dentures, you might say—which are to be flashed at all times. Only the villain, the priest-sorcerer Tzekel-Kan (voice of Armand Assante), has individual teeth, a trait that makes him the film's most human-seeming figure, even when done up in his jaguar-mask outfit.

If you are a pushing-40 parent who buys tickets to kiddie films, you may take your charges to *The Road to El Dorado* in full confidence that they will come away disapproving of human sacrifice. At least the early seventies taught us that much. ■

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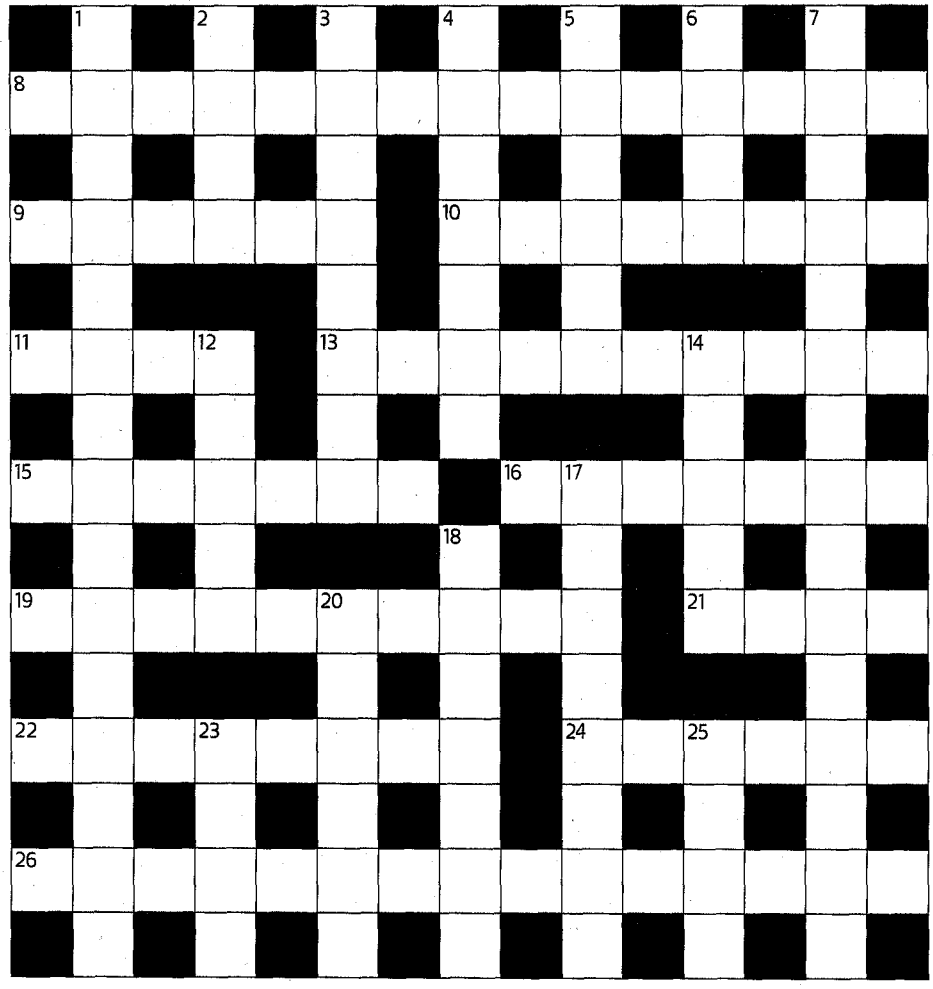

ACROSS

8 Enter, one way or another! Mr. Thumb is the boss, showing how to cause a little trouble. (3,4,8)

9 Pepper might be a maker of one. (6)

10 A somewhat dated term of disapproval, with everyone being given the sack. (3-5)

11 Adversity's weren't said to be bitter, and compared to a toad. (4)

13 From which one gets mohair, playing the organ with a toga on, perhaps. (6,4)

15 Someday you might find a dog, when it's wild. (7)

16 Would it be a delightful description of one form of solitaire? (7)

19 "Cats" together with "mice" is a peculiar way to describe rigorous self-denial. (10)

21 and **23** down A wife on the stage, perhaps—someone to have fun with. (4-4)

22 What Sister Kate does incomparably in a very old song. (8)

24 A relative of Tom, usually found in the reeds. (6)

26 Supposedly a dangerous thing, though too much might make you pedantic. (1,6,8)

DOWN

1 Reputedly the type that gives a lot of love, having come into the world in midweek. (10,5)

2 and **12** Certain livestock have a lot of room, in the old movies...! (9)

3 ...showing how old 2 is, having come across this way. (8)

4 Lift me up to the drinks counter, having the green light to keep things out. (7)

5 Being the same as the aspirated form, one takes care of the horses, being a bad loser about tea, by the sound of it. (6)

6 Proving a person from old Siam can make a hit! (4)

7 The nonspecific kind of talk one expects from the starry army types? (15)

12 See 2

14 Makes a bunch of people grow up without the capital of Washington... (5)

17 ...where one such might be in power. (8)

18 When the speaker starts with this, you can expect several arguments to follow. (7)

20 Shakespearean wall-hanger. (6)

23 See 21 across

25 Get to New York shortly for play—and prize. (4)

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R	E	D	P	O	L	L	■	F	R	E	T	S	A	W
C	■	S	■	K	■	L	■	S	■	S	■	E	■	H
H	O	T	■	S	T	O	N	E	S	■	I	N	T	O
■	■	E	■	A	■	W	■	T	■	B	■	T	■	R
V	E	R	I	F	I	E	D	■	H	O	U	S	E	S
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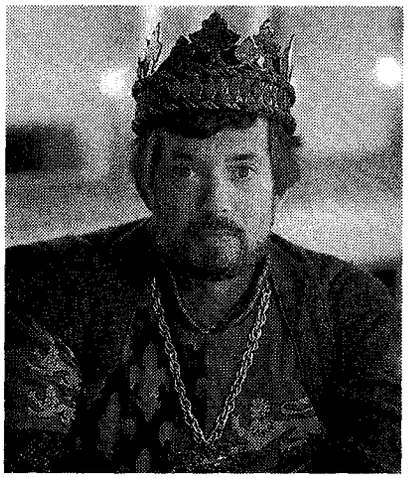

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